WWII QUARTERLY

MILITARY HERITAGE PRESENTS

JOURNAL OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

Curtis 02313

FORTRESS METZ

Patton's Savage Struggle

BLOODY TARAWA

A Marine's Baptism of Fire

OPERATION LONG JUMP

Hitler's Plot To Kill FDR

SETBACK AT SAVO ISLAND

SOVIET WINTER OFFENSIVE

To the Gates of Berlin

SUMMER 2011

$9.99

6 2

7 25274 02313 4


TAKE COMMAND.
STORM™
FRONTLINE NATION
WWW.VIVA-MEDIA.COM
PC
DVD-ROM
SOFTWARE
RATING PENDING
RP
CONTENT RATED BY
ESRB
May contain content inappropriate for children.
Visit www.esrb.org for rating information.
VIVA MEDIA
COLOSSAI STUDIOS
© 2011 COLOSSAI STUDIOS AB. ALL OTHER TRADEMARKS ARE THE PROPERTY OF THEIR RESPECTIVE OWNERS AND USED UNDER LICENSE.
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. PUBLISHED UNDER LICENSE BY VIVA MEDIA®.
Games for Windows

MODERN WAR STUDIES

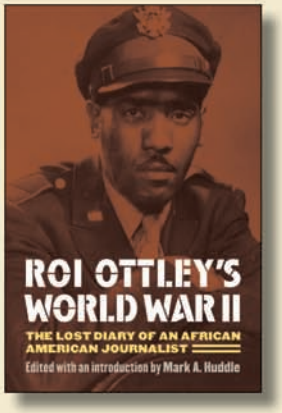
Enduring Battle

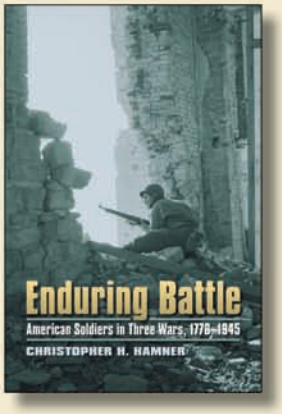
American Soldiers in Three Wars, 1776–1945

Christopher H. Hamner

"Hamner has created an American counterpart to John Keegan's *The Face of Battle*. An excellent and valuable addition to the growing literature on combat motivation and the experience of soldiers in battle."—**Peter R. Mansoor**, author of *The GI Offensive in Europe*

296 pages, Cloth $29.95





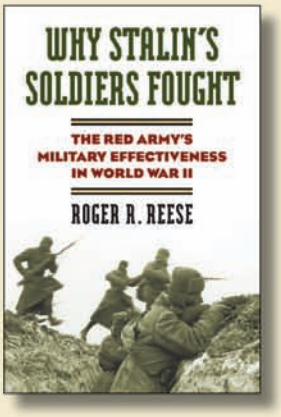
Roi Ottley's World War II

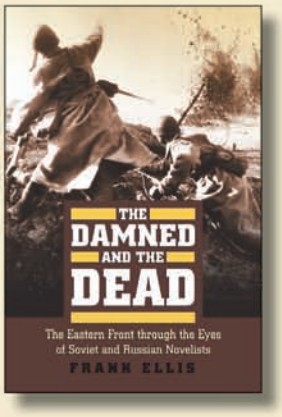
The Lost Diary of an African American Journalist

Edited with an introduction by Mark A. Huddle

"If you think you know the American experience of World War II, just try looking at the European theater through the eyes of African American war correspondent Roi Ottley. I found fascinating new stuff on page after page."—**James Tobin**, author of *Ernie Pyle's War*

200 pages, 1 photograph, Cloth $29.95





Why Stalin's Soldiers Fought

The Red Army's Military Effectiveness in World War II

Roger R. Reese

"Fresh, challenging, provocatively argued, and extensively researched, this is a major contribution to our understanding of the Red Army."—**Reina Pennington**, author of *Wings, Women, and War: Soviet Airwomen in World War II Combat*

400 pages, 10 photographs, Cloth $37.50

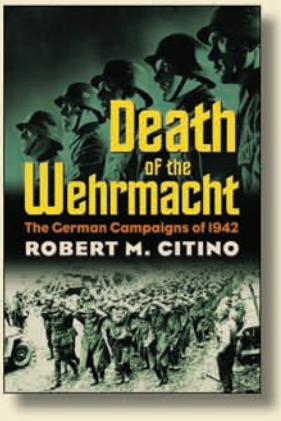
The Damned and the Dead

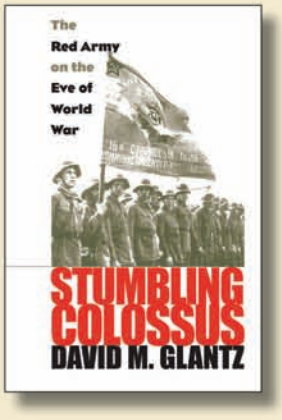
The Eastern Front through the Eyes of Soviet and Russian Novelists

Frank Ellis

"A 'must-read' that lifts the veil from the human dimension of combat in the most brutal theater of World War II."—**David M. Glantz**, author of *The Stalingrad Trilogy*

392 pages, Cloth $34.95





NEW IN PAPERBACK

Death of the Wehrmacht

The German Campaigns of 1942

Robert M. Citino

448 pages, 40 photographs, Paper $24.95

Stumbling Colossus

The Red Army on the Eve of World War

David M. Glantz

392 pages, 40 photographs, 8 maps, Paper $29.95

University Press of Kansas

Phone 785-864-4155 · Fax 785-864-4586 · www.kansaspress.ku.edu

TABLE OF CONTENTS

WWII QUARTERLY

Page 82

Departments

Features

COVER: General Dwight D. Eisenhower, photographed in his Jeep on December 12, 1944.

Popperfoto/Getty Images

WWII Quarterly (ISSN 2151-3678) is published four times yearly by Sovereign Media, 6731 Whittier Avenue, Suite A-100, McLean, VA 22101-4554. (703) 964-0361. *WWII Quarterly*, Volume 2, Number 4 ***Subscription services, back issues, and information:*** **(800) 219-1187** *or* write to *WWII Quarterly* **Circulation, WWII Quarterly, P.O. Box 1644, Williamsport, PA 17703.** Hardbound single copies: $19.99, plus $3 for postage. Yearly subscription in U.S.A.: $39.95; Canada and Overseas: $79.95 (U.S.). Editorial Office: Send editorial mail to *WWII Quarterly*, 6731 Whittier Avenue, Suite A-100, McLean, VA 22101-4554. *WWII Quarterly* welcomes editorial submissions but assumes no responsibility for the loss or damage of unsolicited material. Material to be returned should be accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. We suggest that you send a self-addressed, stamped envelope for a copy of our author's guidelines. **POSTMASTER: Send address changes to WWII Quarterly, P.O. Box 1644, Williamsport, PA 17703.**

World War II–Still Newsworthy After All These Years?

SOMEONE recently asked me, "Is there still much interest in World War II? After all, it's been over for more than 60 years and most of the veterans are gone."

I assured them that, yes, indeed, interest in WWII is still high and shows no sign of slackening any time soon. As if to underscore this phenomenon, over a period of a few weeks, I found the following stories in my daily newspaper:

In Berlin, the German National Museum opened an exhibit of ordinary items that evoked memories of the painful past—an old purse, playing cards, a lantern, a tapestry. While such an exhibit might seem prosaic and of little interest to the German public, it evidently has caused quite a stir, as all the items incorporated swastikas—which, until recently, have been banned from public display, even in museums.

The exhibit, "Hitler and the Germans: Nation and Crime," was billed as the first in Germany since the end of the war to focus exclusively on Hitler and the Nazis. The curators, however, took great care to avoid displaying certain items (such as Hitler's uniforms, which remain in storage) that glorify the regime, focusing instead on the society that nurtured and empowered him.

Another recent article told about search teams finding two mass graves on Iwo Jima that may hold the remains of up to 2,000 Japanese soldiers, while another Pacific-related story said an official team was at Tarawa to find the remains of 560 American servicemen who are still unaccounted for following the three-day battle in November 1943. During digs at five sites, no American remains were found. Numerous Japanese remains, however, were discovered. The goal of the military's Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command is to someday recover the remains of some 78,000 U.S. troops still missing from the war.

Then there was the story about President Obama signing a bill that awarded the Congressional Gold Medal—the highest civilian honor—to the surviving members of the famed Japanese American (Nisei) 442nd Regimental Combat Team and the 100th Infantry Battalion, known as the "Go for Broke" fighting units, as well as 6,000 Japanese Americans who served in military intelligence during the war.

Although many of their families had had their homes and businesses confiscated and were sent to internment camps, thousands of young men volunteered for military duty. The 442nd, which fought in Italy, France, and Germany, received more awards for valor than any other American unit during the war. Of the 33,000 Japanese-Americans who served in WWII, it is estimated that more than 9,000 are still living.

Also making the news was a story about the impending demolition of Boeing's historic Plant No. 2 in Seattle, built in 1936. Half the nearly 13,000 Boeing-designed B-17 "Flying Fortress" bombers were built there. Later in the war, Plant No. 2 constructed the sophisticated B-29 bomber.

With the West Coast bracing for Japanese attack, Boeing camouflaged the plant's roof with a faux village, complete with painted streets and houses made of fabric, making it appear from the air as just another ordinary Seattle neighborhood.

The plant soon became too small for a new generation of bombers. The tail of the B-52 stood 48 feet high, but the roof beams were only 35 feet from the floor. Boeing's temporary fix was to put hinges on the B-52s' vertical fins.

It also seems that almost daily there are the ubiquitous obituaries of WWII veterans. One from a few months back told of the death of Lt. Gen. Albert P. Clark, Jr., 96, a USAAF fighter pilot shot down over France in July 1942. He was imprisoned for 33 months at Stalag Luft III near Sagan, Poland—a camp made famous by the 1963 film, *The Great Escape*. After the war, Clark remained in the Air Force and had many assignments, including commandant of the U.S. Air Force Academy.

In another article, Jim Kurtz of Massachusetts went searching for more information about his father Bob, who piloted a B-24 that was shot down in 1944 over Ehrwald, Austria; Bob Kurtz parachuted to safety and was held in a POW camp for the rest of the war. With the help of a local Austrian, Gerd Leitner, the younger Kurtz found the wreckage of his father's plane in the Alps and took home one of the seats as a memento of his father, who died in 1952.

It is stories and obituaries like these—in addition to programs on the History Channel and the Military Channel, along with books and magazines such as this one—that continue to remind the public about the war. They bring generations born long after the war into the endlessly fascinating period of WWII history. Like the Civil War, interest in WWII seems likely to last forever.

— Flint Whitlock, Editor

WWII History Quarterly Volume 2 ■ Number 4

CARL A. GNAM, JR.
Editorial Director, Founder

FLINT WHITLOCK
Editor
WWIIQuarterly@gmail.com

LAURA CLEVELAND
Managing Editor

SAMANTHA DETULLEO
Art Director

KEVIN M. HYMEL
Research Director

CONTRIBUTORS:
Nick Cariello, G. Paul Garson, Eric Hammel, Heinrik Lunde, Roy Stevenson, William Stroock, Mason B. Webb, William E. Welsh

ADVERTISING OFFICE:

BEN BOYLES
Advertising Manager
(570) 322-7848, ext. 110
benjaminb@sovhomestead.com

MARK HINTZ
Chief Financial Officer

LIZ BOWER
Subscription Customer Services
sovereign@publishersservice associates.com

KEN FORNWALT
Data Processing Director

CURTIS CIRCULATION COMPANY
WORLDWIDE DISTRIBUTION

SOVEREIGN MEDIA COMPANY, INC.
6731 Whittier Ave., Suite A-100
McLean, VA 22101-4554

SUBSCRIPTION CUSTOMER SERVICE AND BUSINESS OFFICE:

1000 Commerce Park Drive,
Suite 300, Williamsport, PA 17701

(800) 219-1187

PRINTED IN THE USA.

For military veterans exposed to asbestos, your battle is just beginning.

Military veterans represent over thirty percent of those with mesothelioma, a deadly form of cancer caused by asbestos exposure.

Asbestos was used by every branch of the military between 1930 and the late 1970s. And since symptoms may not emerge for decades, many U.S. veterans are only now being diagnosed.

Sokolove Law helps veterans like you pursue compensation from the companies that produced and sold harmful asbestos to our U.S. military.

You fought for our country. Now it's our time to fight for you.

Call **1-800-396-2331** or go to **www.asbestosvetlawyer.com** to receive a FREE, no-obligation legal consultation. Contact Sokolove Law today to learn more.

You may be entitled to compensation.

CALL NOW!

1-800-396-2331

www.asbestosvetlawyer.com

SOKOLOVE LAW

WILLIAM E. WELSH is a professional writer/editor residing in Vienna, Virginia. He has written more than 30 articles on topics ranging from the Middle Ages to World War II for various military enthusiast publications, including Sovereign Media's *Military Heritage* and *WWII History* magazines.

Californian **ERIC HAMMEL**, the author of more than 30 books, is acclaimed as one of America's leading authorities on the Pacific War. His article on Savo Island is excerpted from his 1987 book, *Guadalcanal: Starvation Island* (Pacifica Military History).

HENRIK "HANK" LUNDE is a retired Army colonel and decorated Vietnam combat veteran. He has authored numerous articles on a variety of military subjects. His book, *Hitler's Pre-emptive War: The Battle for Norway, 1940*, was published by Casemate in 2009. He lives in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania.

PAUL GARSON is a frequent contributor to *WWII Quarterly*. The photos accompanying "Essen und Trinken" are from his extensive collection of Third Reich images.

NICK CARIELLO, a former journalist, will turn 89 years old on September 11, 2011. He lives in Tucson, Arizona.

WILLIAM STROOCK of northern New Jersey is a professional writer with more than 45 publishing credits to his name. He has also published a novel about Operation Desert Storm titled *A Line Through the Desert*. He is an adjunct professor of history at Raritan Valley Community College and an editor with the Alexandrian Defense Group, a think tank dealing with insurgency and counterinsurgency issues. He is married with two daughters.

Actual size is 40.6 mm

Millions are scrambling for the 2011 Silver Eagle...But we're giving it away TODAY at our lowest price!

The economic crisis has sparked a huge demand for U.S. Mint Silver Eagles. Collectors, investors, dealers and the public alike are scouring the country to obtain them, creating a serious national shortage. But today, as a special offer to new customers you can own these HEFTY Silver Dollars at our lowest price—*only $46.23!**

You Cannot Buy This Coin From the Mint!

The U.S. Mint does not sell Silver Eagle Dollars direct to the public. You can only obtain them through an authorized distributor. We have just reserved a fresh shipment of 2011 U.S. Mint Silver Eagles—the current U.S. Silver Dollar. These massive and attractive coins contain one full troy ounce of silver and feature the historic image of Miss Liberty draped in a U.S. flag walking boldly into the future.

No, We're Not Crazy!

Why are we giving away this silver dollar at our lowest price? Because we want to introduce you to what hundreds of thousands of our satisfied customers have discovered since 1984—***we're your best source for coins worldwide.*** That's why we're giving away this 2011 U.S. Silver Eagle to you—for just $46.23**—to put you on the ground floor of great values like this—values our customers enjoy every day.

Highest Demand Ever for 2010 Eagles. Act Before The 2011s Disappear!

We've never experienced such demand for Silver Eagles as we did in 2010. We predict the same for the 2011 Silver Eagles. So please hurry! They're available RIGHT NOW. And with the current financial crisis they could easily sell out.

Don't Miss Out! Limit 3 Per Customer

At our lowest price, we must set a strict limit of 3 coins per customer. The allure of silver is timeless, and the precious metal is a proven hedge against economic uncertainty. Don't miss out! Call immediately, toll free, 1-888-870-8528 to add these elusive Silver Eagles to your holdings!

TOLL-FREE 24 HOURS A DAY

1-888-870-8528

Offer Code ESL154-02
Please mention this code when you call.

GovMint.com
YOUR ONE BEST SOURCE FOR COINS WORLDWIDE

14101 Southcross Drive W., Dept. ESL154-02
Burnsville, Minnesota 55337

www.GovMint.com

*plus a nominal shipping and handling charge

Note: GovMint.com. is a private distributor of government and private coin and medallic issues and is not affiliated with the United States Government. ***Prices and availability subject to change without notice.*** ©GovMint.com, 2011

**Price based on spot market silver price of $34.60.

BBB ACCREDITED BUSINESS

Elite German commando Otto Skorzeny was given the mission to eliminate Churchill, Stalin, and Roosevelt.

IN GERMAN IT WAS called Operation Rösselsprung, which translates to "Long Jump." Its goal was to kill or kidnap the Allies' "Big Three" leaders—Soviet Premier Josef Stalin, British Prime Minister Winston S. Churchill, and American President Franklin D. Roosevelt—when they met in Tehran, Iran, in November 1943. That the plan did not succeed is attributable to smart intelligence work, a drunken disclosure, and a bit of good luck.

Perhaps no operation was more audacious or had greater consequences to the war's outcome if it had succeeded than Long Jump. Former Soviet Lieutenant General and KGB intelligence officer Vadim Kirpichenko said, "The first secret report that this act was being planned came from Soviet intelligence officer Nikolai Kuznetsov, who learnt about it during a conversation with SS-Sturmbannführer Ulrich von Ortel. Ortel was the chief of the sabotage group in Copenhagen, which was preparing the operation. While drunk, the senior German counterintelligence officer blurted out that preparations were underway to assassinate the Big Three. Later the Soviet Union and Britain discovered other facts confirming that preparations had been made to assassinate Stalin, Churchill, and Roosevelt."

The assassination was scheduled to take place in Tehran, the capital of Iran, after the three Allied leaders announced plans to meet there to hammer out the final strategy for the war against Nazi Germany and its Axis allies. Stalin, whose nation was then still bearing the brunt of the German onslaught, also wanted to know how and when Britain and the United States would open a second front in Western Europe (Churchill was still dead set against a direct assault on the continent, fearing it would lead to catastrophe). The momentous meeting, dubbed Eureka, would be held at the Soviet embassy in Tehran between November 28 and December 1, 1943.

Iran was occupied by Soviet and British troops during the war and it was the "southern route" for Lend-Lease materials being shipped from the United States to the USSR. Although Iran had declared itself neutral on September 4, 1939, and despite the presence of Allied troops in the country, it continued to pursue an openly pro-German policy.

ABOVE: Proudly displaying the dueling scar he received at the University of Vienna, SS Major Otto Skorzeny was one of Nazi Germany's most feared officers. BELOW: Having just completed their audacious rescue mission atop Italy's Gran Sasso, Skorzeny's commandos wave to the departing Benito Mussolini, September 12, 1943.

"The USSR paid close attention to intelligence in Iran," said Kirpichenko, "and not only because the country played a major role in the Middle East during World War II. Its territory was used [by the Germans] for espionage and subversive activities against the USSR, and for disrupting activities in the most important regions of the Soviet homeland."

All photos: National Archives




Preserve the Legacy Forever
Introducing *WWII Quarterly*, The Journal of World War II

Available in Exclusive Hardcover Volumes

Now, for the first time, an exciting new magazine devoted to the study of World War II is available in exclusive hard-bound editions. Subscription copies to *WWII QUARTERLY* are meticulously hardbound for your family library, and will be delivered to your home in pristine condition.

Exquisitely Crafted

From The Battle of The Bulge to Iwo Jima, the history experts at Sovereign Media, publisher of *WWII History* magazine, will document the battles like never before, in a beautiful new hardbound magazine suitable for your coffee table or family library.

An Exceptional Value

Only those who reserve mail subscriptions will receive the exclusive hardbound volumes of *WWII QUARTERLY*. A softcover version will be available in the bookstores and on newsstands, but no hardbound volumes will be available for sale at any store nationwide. You can only receive them by subscribing here, today. Yet, your four-issue, hard-bound subscription costs the same as the softbound newsstand copies... an exceptional value for subscribers!

Order Now

Don't delay. Sign up for your hardbound subscription now.

WWII QUARTERLY
Hardbound Edition
SUBSCRIPTION RESERVATION CARD

❑ *Two Years, 8 Hardbound issues, Only $79.95.*
❑ *One Year, 4 Hardbound issues, Only $39.95.*

❑ Credit Card (below) ❑ Payment Enclosed. ❑ Bill Me

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____ Zip_____

CREDIT CARD: ❑ Mastercard ❑ Visa ❑ American Express

Card Number: _____

Name on Card: _____ Exp. Date: _____ / _____

CVVC Code: _____ *(on back of MC & Visa; on front of AMEX)*

Canada and Overseas, please add $20 per year for additional postage. Payment in U.S. funds must accompany foreign orders.

Mail to: Sovereign Media, 1000 Commerce Park Dr., Suite 300, Williamsport, PA 17701

BD1103

ABOVE: An American military policeman gathers information from a friendly sheik in the Ahwaz region of Iran. RIGHT: The Big Three at their meeting in Tehran: Stalin, Roosevelt, and Churchill.

In Tehran, the occupation armies maintained tight security, establishing numerous checkpoints at which pedestrians and vehicle drivers and passengers were required to show documents. The heavily guarded Soviet and British embassies were adjacent to each other inside a walled park in the center of town; the American embassy was a mile away.

With a German spy network firmly established in Tehran (there were an estimated 400 German agents in the city), the Soviets countered by beefing up their own intelligence operations there. The Soviet Foreign Intelligence Service in Iran was established, headed by Ivan Agayants. Its main mission was to expose foreign spies and organizations that were hostile toward the USSR's interests and to prevent possible acts of subversion and/or sabotage aimed at Soviet military and economic interests in Iran.

Kirpichenko noted, "Soviet and British intelligence officers knew the real situation in that country, which helped them to frustrate Nazi plans in due time, including those to assassinate the leaders of the three great powers."

Chosen to plan and carry out Operation Long Jump was none other than SS-Obersturmbannführer (lieutenant colonel) Otto Skorzeny, Germany's mastermind of daring, unconventional, and audacious commando operations. The tall (6 feet, 3 inches), imposing Skorzeny was already famous (or infamous, from the Allies' point of view) for his bold rescue of deposed Italian dictator Benito Mussolini in September 1943.

On July 25, 1943, Italy's Fascist Grand Council, reeling from the invasion of Sicily and fearing a subsequent destructive invasion of the mainland, forced Mussolini to resign. He was then taken into custody.

Upon hearing this news, Hitler was determined to arrest those responsible for Mussolini's ouster, including the king, and return Il Duce to power by force of arms. Additional German divisions were ordered to move immediately from France and the Eastern Front to Italy. But King Victor Emmanuel III moved faster and named Marshal Pietro Badoglio the new head of government. Badoglio declared Italy officially neutral while, at the same time, he began working secretly to effect an armistice with the Allies. Although Hitler had long ago eclipsed Mussolini as a powerful leader to be feared, he still felt it important to come to the aid of his fellow Axis partner.

During the rescue-planning phase, the names of six German special agents were presented to Hitler as the possible leader of such an expedition. One name that stood out was that of Otto Skorzeny, and Hitler personally selected him to rescue Mussolini.

Otto Skorzeny was born into a middle-class family in Vienna, Austria, on June 12, 1908. While attending the University of Vienna as an engineering student, he joined the fencing team and obtained the prominent dueling scar on his cheek (known in German as a *Schmiss,* for smite or hit) which was then a coveted mark of bravery among German and Austrian youth.

In 1931, as Nazism was gaining popularity in Europe, Skorzeny joined the Austrian Nazi Party and soon became a member of the paramilitary SA, or Sturmabteilung, while working as a civil engineer.

After Germany invaded Poland in 1939, Skorzeny volunteered for service in the German Air Force but was rejected because of his age (he was 31). He then joined the SS and was accepted into the Leibstandarte, Hitler's bodyguard regiment, as an officer-cadet.

In 1940, when Skorzeny was an SS-Untersturmführer (second lieutenant) in the Waffen-SS, his engineering skills gained notice when he designed ramps to load tanks onto ships. He also proved his courage under fire during combat in Holland, France, and the Balkans, where he was decorated after capturing a large Yugoslav force, after which he was promoted to Obersturmführer (first lieutenant).

Skorzeny next saw combat with the 2nd

SS Panzer Division ("Das Reich") during the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941. During the siege of Moscow that autumn, he was in charge of a "technical section" whose mission was to seize important Communist Party buildings, including the NKVD (People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs) headquarters, the Central Telegraph Office, and other high-priority facilities before the Soviets could destroy them. But when German forces failed to capture Moscow, the mission was canceled.

In December 1942, Skorzeny, now a captain, was struck in the head by shrapnel from a Russian rocket. At first refusing medical treatment, he was evacuated to the rear, awarded the Iron Cross for bravery, and sent home to Vienna to recuperate. While there, he became intrigued by commando operations and read all the published literature he could find on the subject. He then began to submit his ideas on unconventional warfare to higher headquarters, which took an interest in his thoughts.

His concepts soon reached the desk of Ernst Kaltenbrunner, the new head of the Reichsicherheitshauptamt (or RSHA, the Reich Security Main Office, which was composed of both the Security Police—Sicherheitspolizei, or Sipo—and the SD), who had replaced former head Reinhard Heydrich when the latter was assassinated in Czechoslovakia in June 1942. Skorzeny's ideas were then passed on to SS-Brigadeführer Walter Schellenberg, head of Amt VI, Ausland-SD (the SS foreign intelligence service office of the RSHA), who requested a meeting with Skorzeny. So impressed was Schellenberg with the officer and his ideas that he appointed Skorzeny commander of the newly created Waffen Sonderverband z.b.V. Friedenthal. Skorzeny's role was to train operatives in espionage, sabotage operations, and paramilitary techniques.

In the summer of 1943, Operation François became Sonderverband z.b.V. Friedenthal's first mission. The objective was to make contact with dissident mountain tribes in Iran and encourage them to sabotage Allied supply lines through Iran heading to the Soviet Union. He discovered that the rebel tribes weren't all that eager to help the Germans, and the mission was abandoned.

By posing as a German officer, Soviet intelligence officer Nikolai Kuznetzov (left) learned the details of the plot. Ernst Kaltenbrunner (right), head of the Reich Security Main Office, gave Skorzeny the orders to carry out Operation Long Jump.

Although Skorzeny had not yet scored any major triumphs, Hitler decided to take a chance on him for Unternehmen Eiche, or Operation Oak, the rescue of Mussolini. After Mussolini's arrest, Il Duce's captors had moved him to the area of Pratica di Mare, an airbase southwest of Rome, where German agents soon located him. On July 27, 1943, Skorzeny and a team of commandos were flying in to parachute onto the airbase and free him, but the Junkers Ju-52 in which they were riding was shot down; Skorzeny and his men were barely able to parachute to safety and escape.

While new plans for a rescue were being made, Operation Avalanche put British and American forces ashore in southern Italy on September 3.

The ex-dictator was continually moved from one hiding place to another, but the Germans soon discovered him at a villa on La Maddalena, near Sardinia. Skorzeny was able to smuggle an Italian-speaking commando onto the island who confirmed that Mussolini was indeed there. Skorzeny then flew over in a Heinkel He-111 to take aerial photos of the location. The bomber was shot down by Allied fighters and crashed into the sea, but Skorzeny and his men were rescued by an Italian warship.

Mussolini was again moved, this time to the Campo Imperatore Hotel at the top of the Gran Sasso peak in the rugged Italian Apennine mountains in central Italy east of Rome—a place accessible only by cable car from the valley far below.

Captain Skorzeny flew over the site and photographed the area; it was formidable in the extreme, but he, Luftwaffe General Kurt Student (who had earlier conceived Germany's famous airborne and glider operations against Belgium's Eban Emael fortress and the British-held island of Crete), and Major Otto-Harald Mors, a paratrooper battalion commander, came up with a workable plan. Skorzeny assembled a team of 107 commandos who would be landed in gliders.

On September 12, 1943, Skorzeny and his 107 men silently descended on the mountaintop in 12 gliders, took the Italian Carabinieri guards by surprise without firing a single shot, and whisked the ex-dictator away in a Storch airplane to Rome. The rest of the commando team escaped by cable car. Skorzeny then flew Mussolini to meet with Hitler. It was a stunningly brazen, textbook example of the perfect commando operation—an operation that earned Skorzeny fame, promotion to major, Hitler's gratitude (not to mention Mussolini's), and the Knight's Cross of the Iron Cross.

In mid-October 1943, after the Germans broke a U.S. Navy coded message, German intelligence learned the date and place of the Tehran conference. Exactly who first came up with the idea of assassinating the Big Three during the conference is unknown (Kaltenbrunner can't be ruled out), but the plan was approved by Hitler and Kaltenbrunner was told to carry it out. Because of Skorzeny's recent rescue of Mussolini, he was the logical choice to head the mission.

On November 21, a German radio broadcast had announced that the Big Three would hold a meeting in Tehran at the end of the month, and there were rumors that the Germans might attempt to kill the leaders. As luck would have it, among a group of Soviet guerrillas operating in the Rovno forest in the German-occupied Ukraine was the legendary Soviet intelligence officer Nikolai Kuznetsov, who spoke perfect German. Posing as a Wehrmacht first lieutenant by the name of Paul Siebert, Kuznetsov penetrated German lines and became friendly with SS-Sturmbannführer Ulrich von Ortel, who happened to be well versed in the Long Jump plot.

Kuznetsov/Siebert kept pouring the drinks and the inebriated Ortel kept talking, telling Kuznetsov that he would soon depart for the meeting of the Big Three in Tehran, where, "We will eliminate Stalin and Churchill and turn the tide of the war! We will abduct Roosevelt to help our Führer to come to terms with America. We are flying in several groups. People are already being trained in a special school in Copenhagen." Ortel even promised to introduce the spy to Skorzeny.

It was an intelligence coup of massive proportions.

With Moscow and the Soviet legation in Tehran now alerted, the plan was allowed to unfold. The first German group, consisting of six radio operators, was dropped by parachute at Qum. Soviet intelligence officer Gevork Vartanyan said after the war, "Our group was the first to locate the Nazi landing party—six radio operators—near the town of Qum, 60 kilometers from Tehran. We followed them to Tehran, where the Nazi field station had readied a villa for their stay. They were traveling by camel and were loaded with weapons."

Vartanyan noted that as the six men approached Tehran, a pre-arranged truck appeared and they loaded their equipment—radios, weapons, and explosives—into it. They moved into a "safe house" in Tehran, set up their communications equipment, changed into civilian clothes, and disguised their appearance by dyeing their hair. But then things started to fall apart.

"While we were watching the group," said Vartanyan, "we established that they had contacted Berlin by radio and recorded their communications. When we decrypted these radio messages, we learned that the Germans were preparing to land a second group of subversives for a terrorist act—the assassination or abduction of the Big Three. The second group was supposed to be led by Skorzeny himself, who had already visited Tehran to study the situation on the spot. We had been following all his movements even then."

Once Roosevelt and his party had arrived in Tehran, General Dmitry Arkadiev, head of the NKVD department of transportation, contacted Roosevelt's chief of security, Mike Reilly, and told him of the plot. The American ambassador to the Soviet Union, Averell Harriman, then briefed the president on the still-sketchy details of the plot. All agreed that going ahead with the meeting was risky but that it should be done.

To reduce the danger to Roosevelt, who would have to travel by car the mile between the American embassy and the Soviet embassy, where the meetings would be held, it was decided to allow FDR and his party to stay in guest quarters at the Soviet embassy—where the hosts had already liberally planted secret listening devices to learn every word spoken by the president and his team.

Vartanyan said, "We arrested all the members of the first group and forced them to make contact with enemy intelligence under our supervision. It was tempting to seize Skorzeny himself, but the Big Three had already arrived in Tehran and we could not afford the risk. We deliberately gave a radio operator an opportunity to report the failure of the mission, and the Germans decided against sending the main group under Skorzeny to Tehran. In this way, the success of our group in locating the Nazi advance party and our subsequent actions thwarted an attempt to assassinate the Big Three."

(In the interest of full disclosure, it should be noted that, to this day, counterstories have appeared that have claimed there never was a Nazi plot to kill or kidnap the Big Three in Tehran. Some historians contend that the "plot" was an imaginary one hatched by Stalin himself as a way to get Roosevelt to stay in the "bugged" guest quarters on the grounds of the Soviet embassy. Others who were high-ranking officers in Soviet intelligence at the time swear the plot was real and have written books on the subject. As with many aspects of the labyrinthine former Soviet Union, the true facts may never be known.)

The failure of Operation Long Jump did not diminish Skorzeny's reputation in the eyes of the Nazi warlords, nor put an end to covert commando operations. In the spring of 1944, his unit, now renamed SS Jagdverbände 502, undertook a mission to abduct the Yugoslav partisan leader Josip Broz Tito, but the operation was compromised and called off.

In mid-October 1944, Skorzeny was given a new assignment: Operation Panzerfaust (also known as Operation Mickey Mouse)—the kidnapping of Miklós Horthy, Jr., the youngest son of Admiral Miklós Horthy, Regent of the Kingdom of Hungary, who had earlier supported the Nazis but had become disenchanted with them and announced his intention to withdraw his nation from the Axis. Germany threatened to kill the younger Horthy if his father did not resign as regent. He did so and was placed under house arrest in Bavaria; his son was imprisoned at the Dachau concentration camp until the end of the war.

Skorzeny is probably best known in the West for, in December 1944, employing about two dozen English-speaking Germans in American uniforms and driving American vehicles to penetrate American lines in an operation called Greif ("Griffin") that spread panic and confusion during the Battle of the Bulge. At war's end, Skorzeny was involved in Germany's Werwölfe (Werewolf) insurgency movement. He surrendered to the Americans on May 16, 1945, near Salzburg, Austria.

After the war, Skorzeny was charged by the Dachau Military Tribunal with breaching the 1907 Hague Convention in connection with his men masquerading as Americans during Operation Greif. He was, however, acquitted by the tribunal when it was learned that Allied teams sometimes did the same things. He fled from a detention compound in 1948 and, with help of a network of friends and former SS officers, changed his identity and moved relatively freely throughout Europe, eventually ending up in Spain, where he wrote a book about his exploits.

A heavy smoker, Skorzeny died of lung cancer in July 1975, his legacy as a brilliant, unorthodox commander, tactician, and theorist tarnished by the evil regime for which he worked.

But one wonders—had Operation Long Jump been successfully carried out, what would have been the consequences for world history? It remains another of the war's many imponderables. □

CRUSADE WWII

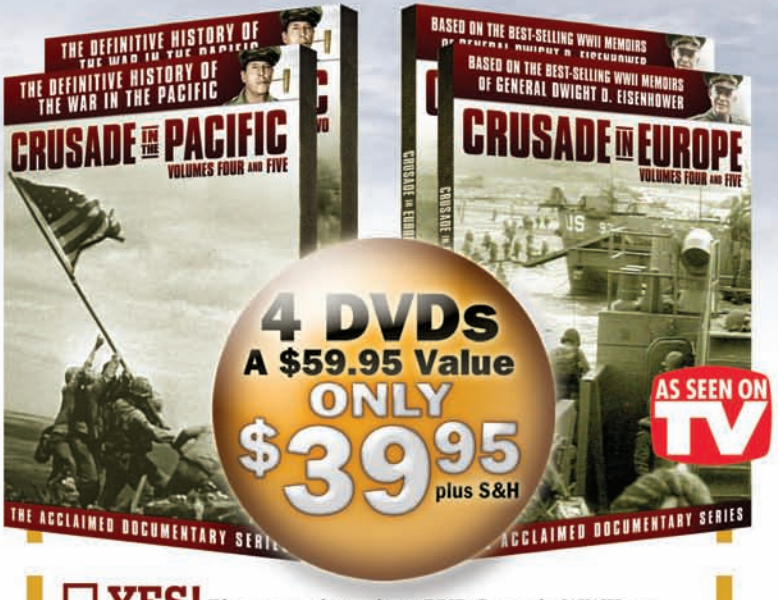
POINT OF NO RETURN

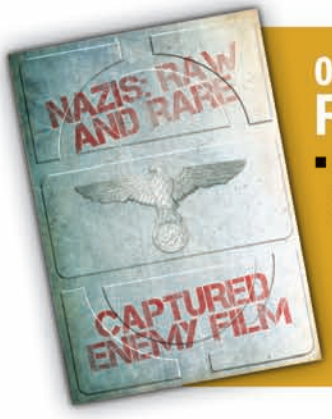
The Most Extraordinary War Footage Ever Caught on Film

These are the *real* stories, the *real* men, the *real* action. Not one, but two of the most awe-inspiring war documentaries ever made. *Crusade in Europe. Crusade in the Pacific.* Together for the first time on DVD. Will put you as close to the action as you'll ever be. So close you can feel it.

Get Crusade WWII POINT OF NO RETURN — 20 Full Episodes that reveal the epic struggle for victory from *the* crucial turning points in both theatres of the war and arguably all of history! From D-Day to Bastogne. From The Bulge to Berlin. From Saipan to Bloody Nose Ridge. From Iwo to Tokyo.

- **Not available in stores** or anywhere else.
- Together for the **first time on DVD.**
- Emmy Award Winning. Peabody Award Winning.
- The definitive account of WWII—**as seen through the eyes of the men who fought it.**





Order today & receive your FREE BONUS DVD!

- Rare captured enemy footage — much of it uncut and never before issued.
- Developed exclusively for *Crusade WWII* collectors.
- Not available for purchase — anywhere or ever before!

☐ **YES!** Please send me the 4 DVD Crusade WWII set featuring 10 episodes each from *Crusade in Europe* and *Crusade in the Pacific* for just $39.95, plus $6.99 S&H. I understand that I will also receive the FREE bonus DVD, *Captured Enemy Film*.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State_____ ZIP_____

Phone Number (_____) _____

For mail-in orders, please send this coupon along with your check for $46.94 made payabe to Crusade WWII. Mail to: Crusade WWII, 2308 Mount Vernon Ave., Suite 818, Alexandria, VA 22301

Please allow 2-3 weeks for delivery.
Please add state/local tax for deliveries to Virginia and Iowa.

30-Day Satisfaction Guarantee (Return for a full refund, less S&H)

Breathtaking in Scope. Bone Chilling in Visual Detail.

ORDER TODAY! Call 1.800.584.7738 or Click www.WWIICrusade.com

In the autumn of 1944, Third Army's eastward dash ran into well-entrenched Germans and miserable weather at Europe's strongest fortress. BY WILLIAM E. WELSH

LIEUTENANT General George Patton's Third Army had come a long way since it was activated on August 1 in Normandy. Following the breakout from Normandy in late July, Patton's army had swept 400 miles in one month's time all across central France to the Lorraine region, where it was met by General der Panzertruppen Otto Knobelsdorff's First Army, which was determined to defend the Moselle line.

Nevertheless, the XII Corps under Maj. Gen. Manton Eddy on Patton's right, or southern, wing, was able to cross the Moselle and concentrate at Arracourt, while his other corps, the XX Corps, under Maj. Gen. Walton Walker, aimed directly for Metz.

Reinforced by General der Panzertruppen Hasso von Manteuffel's 5th Panzer Army in the middle of the month, Knobelsdorff's First Army was in a position to launch a major counterattack against Eddy's XII Corps bridgehead. A surprise attack against Eddy's right flank at Lunéville on September 18 marked the beginning of a protracted 11-day tank battle in which German forces tried unsuccessfully to isolate and destroy Eddy's bridgehead on the east bank of the Moselle.

Throughout the course of the Battle of Arracourt, the Germans were constantly forced to scale back their objectives when the Americans successfully parried one blow after another. During the fighting, Maj. Gen. John Wood's 4th Armored Division—dubbed "Patton's Best" by its members and "Roosevelt's Butchers" by the enemy—was able to inflict heavy losses on German panzer units.

The fighting fizzled out when German Führer Adolf Hitler transferred Manteuffel's Fifth Army north at the end of the month to counter the Allies' moves against the West Wall, as well as part of preparations for a planned winter attack through the Ardennes.

An officer from the 26th Infantry Division peers around a wall in Sarre-Union, France—east of Metz—as one of his men brings up a .30-caliber machine gun.

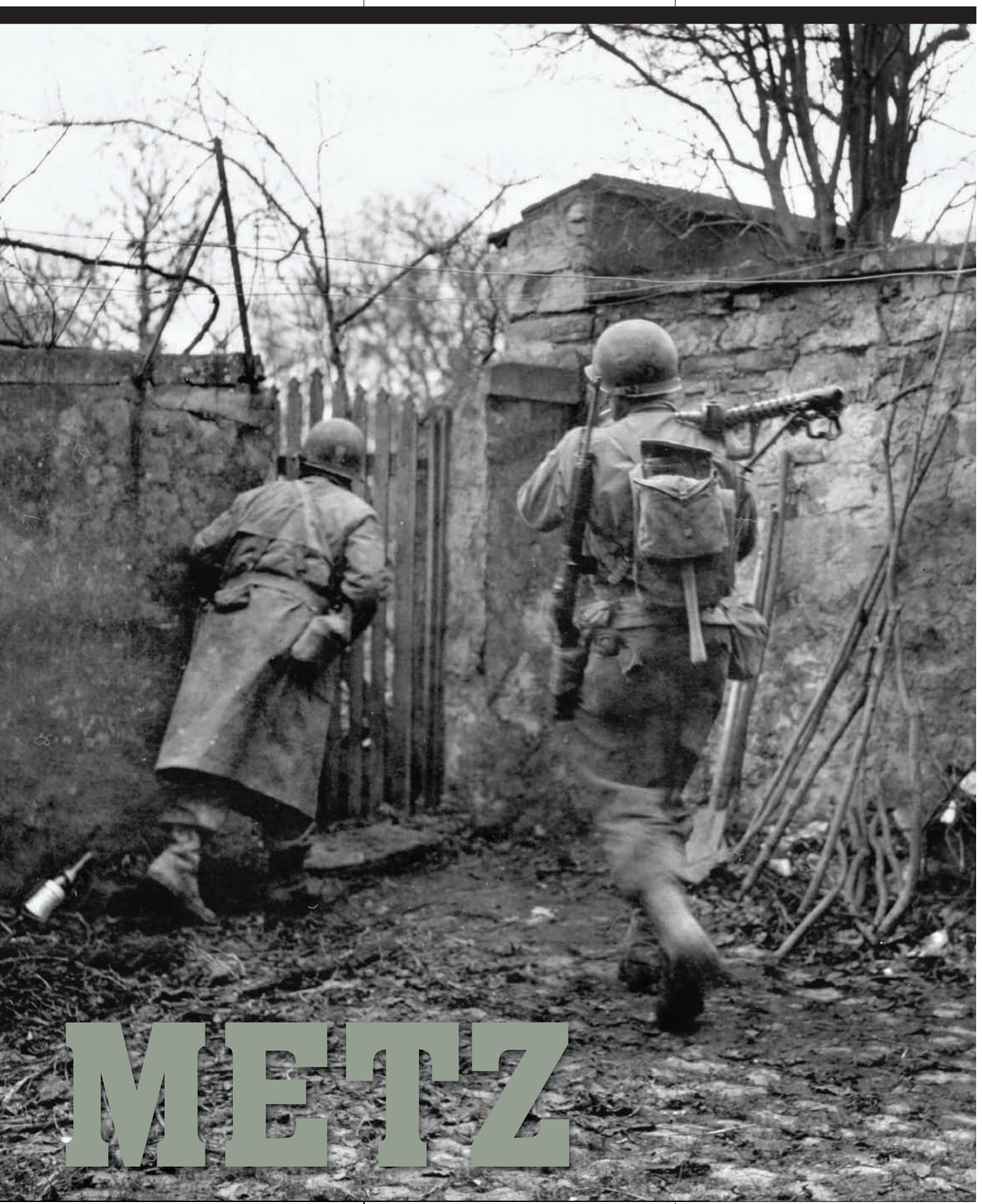
On September 25 12th Army Group commander Lt. Gen. Omar Bradley had ordered Patton to go on the defensive so that precious fuel reserves could be channeled to Allied forces engaged in Operation Market Garden, a major operation designed to capture key bridges in Holland. The shortage of fuel meant that Patton was unable to follow up his victory at Arracourt with a counterstroke that might have allowed his troops to reach the West Wall before the onset of bad weather.

Loud grumbling from Patton could do nothing to change the situation. Still, the Third Army's commander was too impatient to sit idly by with German forces within striking distance. At the end of September 1944 fuel wasn't the only commodity in short supply for the Third Army. Patton's men also lacked howitzer ammunition, rain gear, blankets, and sufficient rations. Morale dipped as a result, and Patton set about finding a way to keep his troops in the fight—regardless of the dismal supply situation.

As soon as Patton received the official word that he was to take a defensive stance, he submitted to Bradley a plan he had drawn up that he hoped would enable him to con-

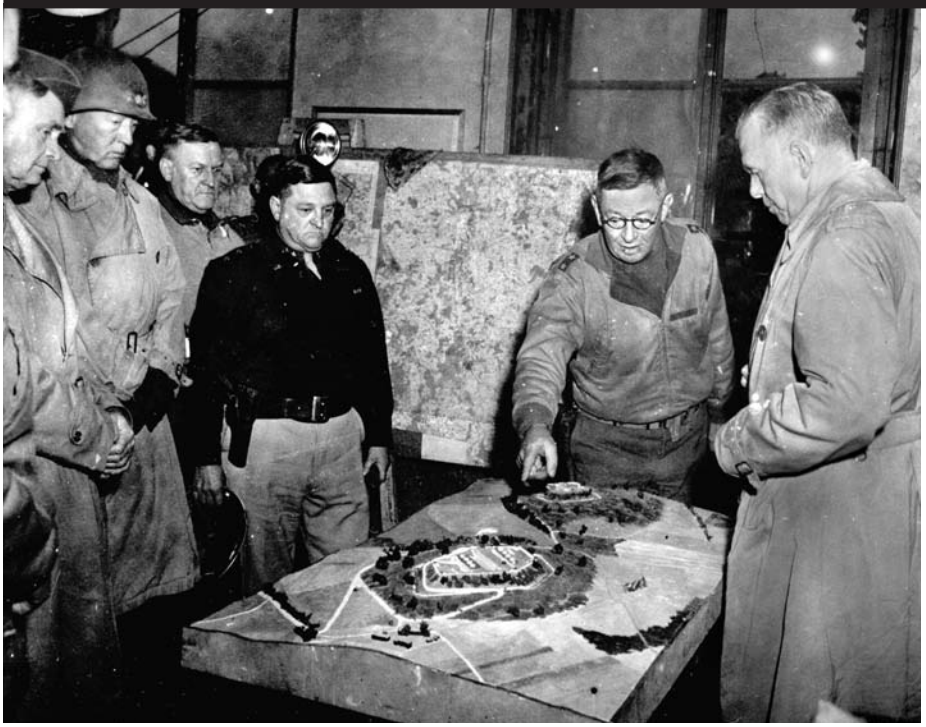
PATTON IN LORRAINE—PART 2

Bloody Battle at FORTRESS



METZ

All photos National Archives unless credited otherwise



ABOVE: Using a model of the Metz area to brief visiting brass at his headquarters on November 10, 1944, is 5th Infantry Division Commanding General S. Leroy Irwin. Among the visitors are Lt. Gen. Thomas T. Handy, the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff (left) and Lt. Gen. George S. Patton, Jr. (second from left). Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall is at right. BELOW: Bombs from a P-47 fighter-bomber of the XIX Tactical Air Command explode atop Fort Driant in the Metz ring of fortifications, September 27, 1944.

tinue limited offensive operations. "The whole plan was based ... on maintaining the offensive spirit of the troops by attacking at various points whenever my means permitted it," Patton wrote in his memoirs. In addition to keeping his various units in fighting trim, these limited attacks were meant to adjust the Army's line in key places so as to give the units favorable departure points for resuming full-scale offensive operations once more fuel became available.

While Eddy's XII Corps units had firmly established themselves to a depth of 15 to 20 miles on the east bank of the Moselle, the one division of Maj. Gen. Walton Walker's XX Corps that had managed to cross the Moselle just south of Metz in September remained in a precarious position. Maj. Gen. Leroy Irwin's 5th Infantry Division had crossed at Arnaville on September 10, but since then had been contained by the veteran 17th SS Panzergrenadier Division in fortified positions atop high ground to the east.

The continuing reorganization of Allied forces on the Western Front left Patton with four veteran infantry and two armored divisions with which to prosecute his limited attacks in early October. Maj. Gen. Wade Haislip's XV Corps was reassigned to Lt. Gen. Jacob Devers's Sixth Army Group, which lay to the Third Army's south, while the 7th Armored Division was transferred from Walker to Lt. Gen. William Simpson's Ninth Army. In return, Patton was promised three new divisions between mid-October and the first week of November.

The main German force responsible for holding Metz was Knobelsdorff's First Army, which belonged to General der Panzertruppen Hermann Balck's Army Group G; Balck kept a close hand in the First Army's operations. The German First Army had lost the cream of its forces after September. The crack 3rd and 15th Panzergrenadier Divisions were transferred north as part of the assembly of elite units to counter Allied moves against the West Wall (and, as mentioned, to prepare for Hitler's coming winter offensive that would be known as the Battle of the Bulge). Another unit, the veteran 553rd Volksgrenadier Division, was sent south to join the Ninteenth Army. Of the First Army's nine divisions, only four had offensive capabilities. The other five, because of a lack of equipment and experience, were capable only of static defense.

Knobelsdorff's First Army forces comprised the 11th Panzer and 17th SS Panzergrenadier Divisions, the 48th and 416th Divisions, the Luftwaffe 9th Flak Division, and the 19th, 361st, 462nd, and 559th Volksgrenadier Divisions. The 416th Division and the 19th and 361st Volksgrenadier Divisions would begin arriving in the sector in Octo-

ber but were pitiful substitutes for the troops they were meant to replace.

Balck's reserve consisted only of Generalleutnant Wend Wiethersheim's 11th Panzer Division. Wiethersheim enjoyed the distinction of being the only commander in the string of battles fought in September to seriously threaten the Americans. Having lost nearly all his armor in the September fighting, Wiethersheim had pleaded for more tanks and by the beginning of November had an armored force consisting of 60 Panthers and Mark IVs and 10 tank destroyers with which to counter Third Army breakthroughs in the German battle line.

In the north, on the German right flank, was stationed the untested 416th Division, which consisted of middle-aged garrison troops from Denmark led by Generalleutnant Kurt Pflieger. Directly opposite Thionville, and in supporting distance of the Metz garrison, was Oberst Karl Britzelmayr's 19th Volksgrenadier Division, which had seen combat and had enough field artillery to be reasonably effective in static defense. Generalleutnant Vollrath Luebbe's 462nd Volksgrenadier Division manned the Metz fortifications and General der Waffen-SS Werner Ostendorff's 17th SS Panzergrenadier Division held the ground immediately south of the city. Generalleutnant Carl Caspar's 48th Division, the smallest and weakest unit in the First Army, was stationed south of the Panzergrenadiers.

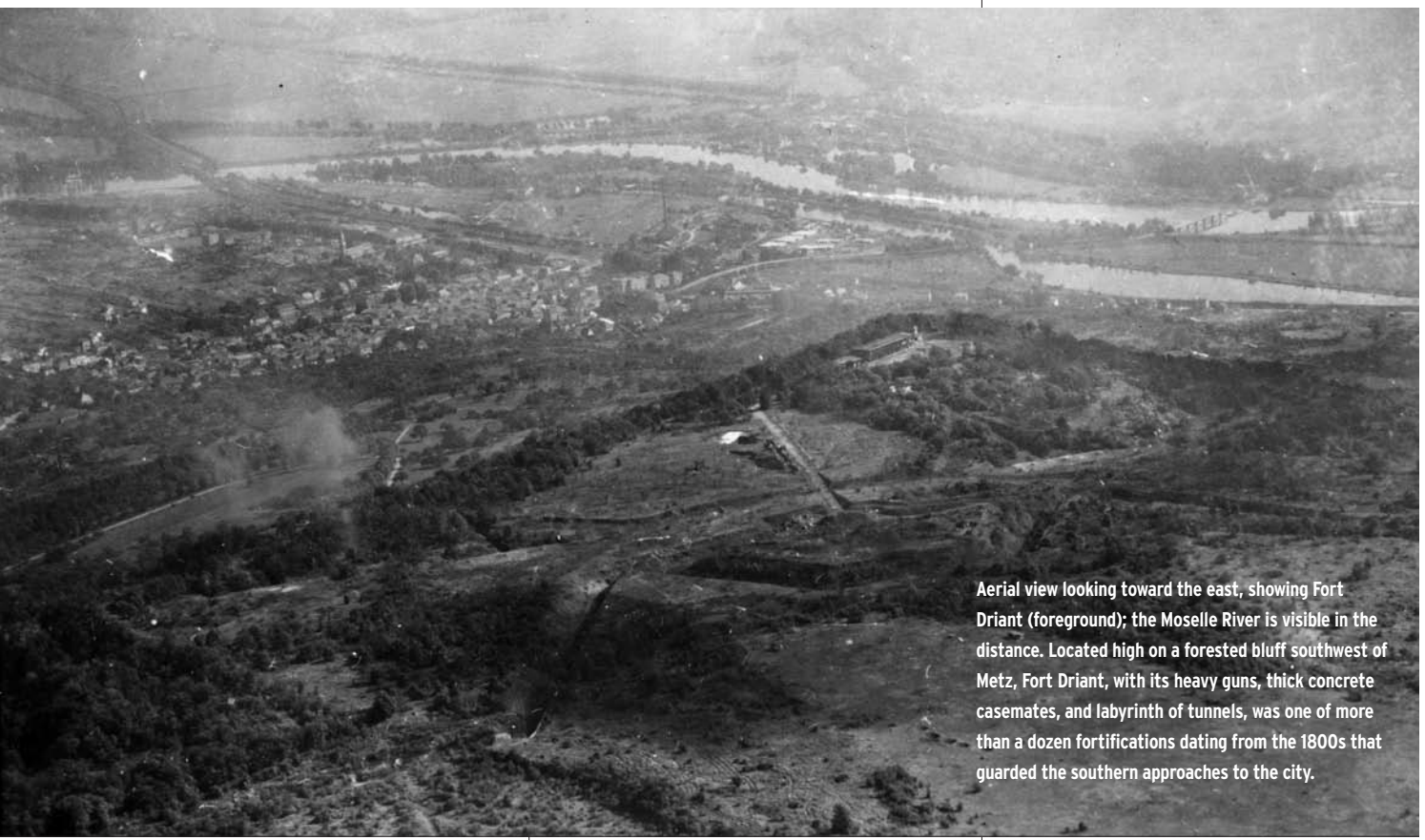
The hilly forests and valleys east of Nancy were defended by General Major Kurt Freiherr Muehlen's 559th Volksgrenadier Division. Farther south, Oberst Alfred Philippi's 361st Volksgrenadier Division—a hodgepodge of sailors and Luftwaffe support personnel inexperienced in ground combat—anchored the German left flank.

The 9th Flak Division supported the First Army's left flank, and Wiethersheim's 11th Panzer Division was positioned about 15 miles behind the main line in the center near Saint Avold, where it could respond quickly to any threat along the 60-mile front.

Although Eddy's XII Corps on Patton's right flank launched an attack on October 8 to correct its line and establish a bridgehead on the east bank of the Seille River in preparation for the pending full-scale offensive, the two bloodiest local attacks during October were carried out by Walker's XX Corps on the west bank of the Moselle—one north of Metz at the industrial town of Maizieres-les-Metz and one south of it at Fort Driant.

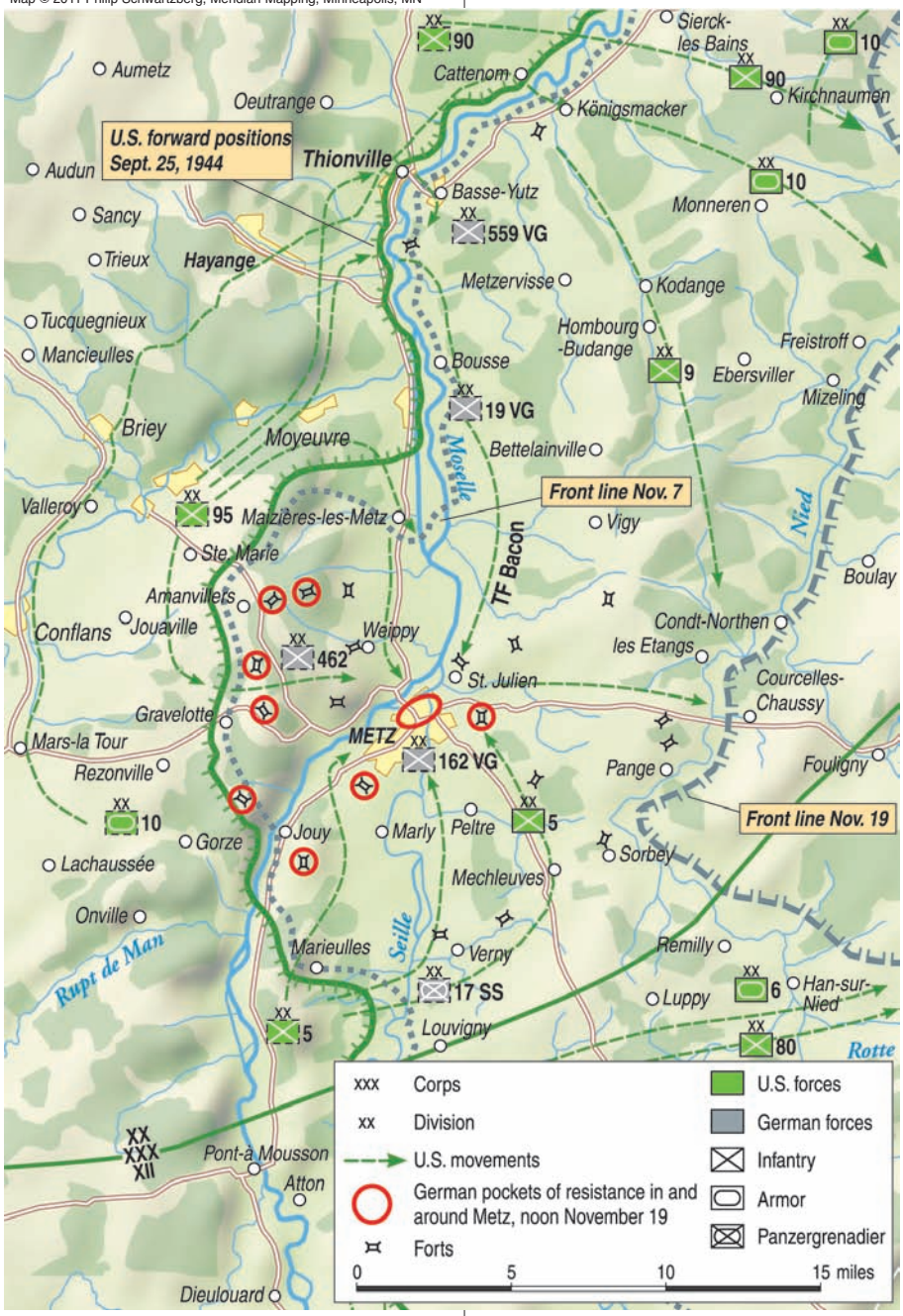
Fort Driant, which was part of the chain of forts at Metz on the west bank of the Moselle guarding the approach from that direction, was the primary objective of a limited attack assigned to troops from Irwin's 5th Infantry Division. Until Driant's five batteries were silenced, it would be impossible for Patton's infantry to move up the Moselle River along the east bank and attack the city itself.

The very large thorn in the Third Army's side was the sprawling Metz fortress system whose octopus-like tentacles spread six miles west of the Moselle and reached back another four miles to the east of the old Gallo-Roman city. The massive system, which made Metz the most heavily forti-



Aerial view looking toward the east, showing Fort Driant (foreground); the Moselle River is visible in the distance. Located high on a forested bluff southwest of Metz, Fort Driant, with its heavy guns, thick concrete casemates, and labyrinth of tunnels, was one of more than a dozen fortifications dating from the 1800s that guarded the southern approaches to the city.

Map © 2011 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN



Third Army's advance from the West and attack on Metz was complicated by the hilly terrain, bad weather, German resistance, and the broad Moselle River.

fied city in Europe at the time, consisted of 43 forts arrayed in an inner and outer belt that together mounted 128 heavy guns. Artillery fired from strategic forts in the outer belt had wreaked havoc on attempts by Walker's infantry divisions to cross the Moselle above and below the city during September.

The forts in the outer belt were situated in close proximity to each other so as to provide mutual support. The two most formidable forts on the west bank were named "Driant" and "Jeanne D'Arc." In those and other modern forts in the complex, the guns were housed in revolving steel turrets and their crews and the rest of the garrison protected in subterranean quarters surrounded by dry moats and multiple rows of barbed wire designed to make a direct assault against the fort a costly endeavor.

Back in September, and going by faulty intelligence indicating that the fort was thinly held, Colonel Charles Yuill, commanding the 5th Division's 11th Infantry Regiment, drafted a plan of attack that, although opposed by Irwin, nevertheless received a stamp of approval from Walker and Patton.

Driant was one of the strongest and most modern forts in the outer belt surrounding Metz. It was situated five miles southwest of Metz on the west bank of the Moselle atop a 1,200-foot hill and surrounded by rows of barbed wire on the outer perimeter and within by a dry moat 60 feet wide and 30 feet deep meant to impede infantry and tracked vehicles. Although its 100mm and 150mm guns were mounted in turrets visible above ground, the bunkers and the central fort were located underground and linked by a network of tunnels, all of which was protected by a 15-foot-thick roof of reinforced concrete.

On the morning of September 27, P-47 Thunderbolts swooped low over the fort and dropped 1,000-pound bombs and napalm canisters on the trenches at the base of the fort and on the structure itself. That afternoon, Yuill's 2nd Battalion, with the support of a company of tank destroyers, attacked from two directions but made no headway against enemy pillboxes leading up to the fort. The following day no additional progress was made, and the attack was broken off.

Despite the repulse, Patton was unwilling to call off the attack so quickly. "We have put our hands to the plow; we must finish the job," he told Walker.

Fresh tactics were devised. When Yiull's men attacked again five days later on October 3, they were armed with Bangalore torpedoes and satchel charges. One company managed to gain a toehold on the southwest section of the fort's roof, which it precariously held for two days. However, repeated enemy sorties from underground bunkers disrupted the demolition work and threatened to isolate Yuill's forward detachments. What's more, the Germans began shelling the American positions at Fort Driant from neighboring forts.

A chilling situation report written October 4 by Captain Jack Gerrie from his position

at the deepest penetration of the fort was carried by messenger back to his superiors: "The situation is critical. A couple more barrages and a counterattack and we are sunk. We have no men, our equipment is shot, and we just can't go on. The enemy artillery [from adjacent forts] is butchering these troops and we have nothing else to hold."

Irwin broke off the attack the following day and replaced elements of his battered 11th Infantry with fresh troops from his 2nd and 10th Regiments; the two units renewed the assault on October 7. This time, the Americans attempted to fight their way into the underground entrances to the fort but made no better progress; they soon were bogged down.

ABOVE: Miserable autumn weather forced many in Patton's Third Army to seek shelter—even if that shelter was a only muddy foxhole under canvas. BELOW: An M-4 Sherman tank, outfitted with track extenders (known as "duck bills") for better traction in muddy conditions, crosses a rain-soaked field near Metz.

After days of heavy fighting, during which American losses mounted, Patton reluctantly issued orders for the troops to break off the fight. On the night of October 12, the last of the troops were withdrawn from around Fort Driant. It was a significant tactical defeat for Patton's Third Army, which had nothing to show for the 800 casualties suffered by Irwin's division. Still, lessons learned in fortress fighting would be applied the following month.

While the men of Irwin's "Red Diamond" division had been fighting a losing battle to capture Driant, Maj. Gen. Raymond McLain's 90th Division was engaged in trying to clear the Germans from their entrenched positions in Maizieres-les-Metz, a factory town on the west bank of the Moselle five miles northwest of Metz. If McLain's forces could capture the town, it would give them a strong position on the right flank of the German forces still occupying the outer string of forts on the west bank of the Moselle.

On October 7, the 2nd Battalion of Colonel George Barth's 357th Infantry Regiment, 90th Division, had attacked the town from the west and north. Realizing the threat the Americans posed, Balck sent an additional regiment into the town that helped stop the assault. Patton, who craved fast-moving offensives, was frustrated by the inertia that had been imposed upon his army at Metz because of enemy resistance and the lack of fuel.

Meanwhile, on October 10, after it was learned that Operation Market Garden had ended in failure for the Allies, Bradley summoned his generals to Verdun to set the wheels in motion for a new allied offensive against the Germans.

Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force General Dwight D. Eisenhower and his staff envisioned for fall 1944 a two-pronged offensive to capture the Ruhr and Saar industrial regions that fed the Third Reich's belly. General Courtney Hodges's First Army and General Allen Simpson's Ninth Army would lead the primary attack against the larger Ruhr in the north, while in the south General

George Patton's Third Army would strike at the smaller Saar. Although no firm date was set for when the offensive would begin, Bradley tasked his subordinates with crafting detailed plans for their respective sectors. It was just what Patton had been itching for.

Bradley arranged for Patton to receive three fresh, untested divisions for the upcoming offensive. The first of these due to arrive in the Third Army's sector was Maj. Gen. Willard Paul's 26th Infantry Division, which took up its position on Eddy's right flank on October 12. Walker's corps would receive the other two new divisions; the 95th Infantry Division, led by Maj. Gen. Harry Twaddle, would begin arriving in the XX Corps sector on October 18, where it was to help contain German forces in the western portion of the Metz fortress complex. To compensate for the earlier transfer of the 7th Armored Division, Walker received Maj. Gen. William Morris's 10th Armored Division, which did not take up its place on Walker's left flank until November 2.

On October 14, Patton and his corps commanders began to draft the Third Army's plan of attack. The final plan submitted to Bradley called for a double envelopment of Metz by the XX Corps on the Third Army's left flank, in which the 90th Infantry Division, supported by Maj. Gen. William Morris's 10th Armored Division, would form the northern pincer and Irwin's 5th Infantry Division would form the southern pincer. Lead elements of the two infantry divisions were to rendezvous east of Metz in the general vicinity of Boulay-Moselle. The double envelopment was intended to bring about the fall of Metz by cutting the supply routes into the city "without getting mixed up with the forts," Patton said.

Town fighting proved just as hard. Inside Maizieres-les-Metz, the battle seesawed back and forth for a week, then longer. On October 15, command of the 90th passed from McLain to his replacement, Maj. Gen. James Van Fleet, who pushed the 357th to complete its mission.

The enemy fortified the town's buildings using sandbags and barbed wire. The ensuing house-to-house fighting gave the soldiers of the 357th a chance to hone their fortress-fighting skills. In situations where the Americans occupied one room of a building and the Germans an adjacent one, the Americans would stuff rags into five-gallon gasoline cans, ignite the contraption, and hurl it into the enemy-occupied room.

In the center of the city, the Germans transformed the sturdy Hotel de Ville (city hall) into a miniature fortress impervious to light anti-tank weapons. On October 20, the Americans brought forward a 150mm howitzer to pound enemy forces inside the building.

The fighting surged back and forth around the city hall for an entire week. When the Americans finally fought their way into the building on October 26, they were driven off by enemy troops armed with flamethrowers. Colonel Barth then ordered his troops to bypass the position and focus on clearing the rest of the town instead. After Barth's infantry pulled back from the city hall, the building was pulverized by 240mm howitzers firing from outside the city. On the 30th, Barth reported to his superiors that Maizieres-les-Metz was finally in American hands.

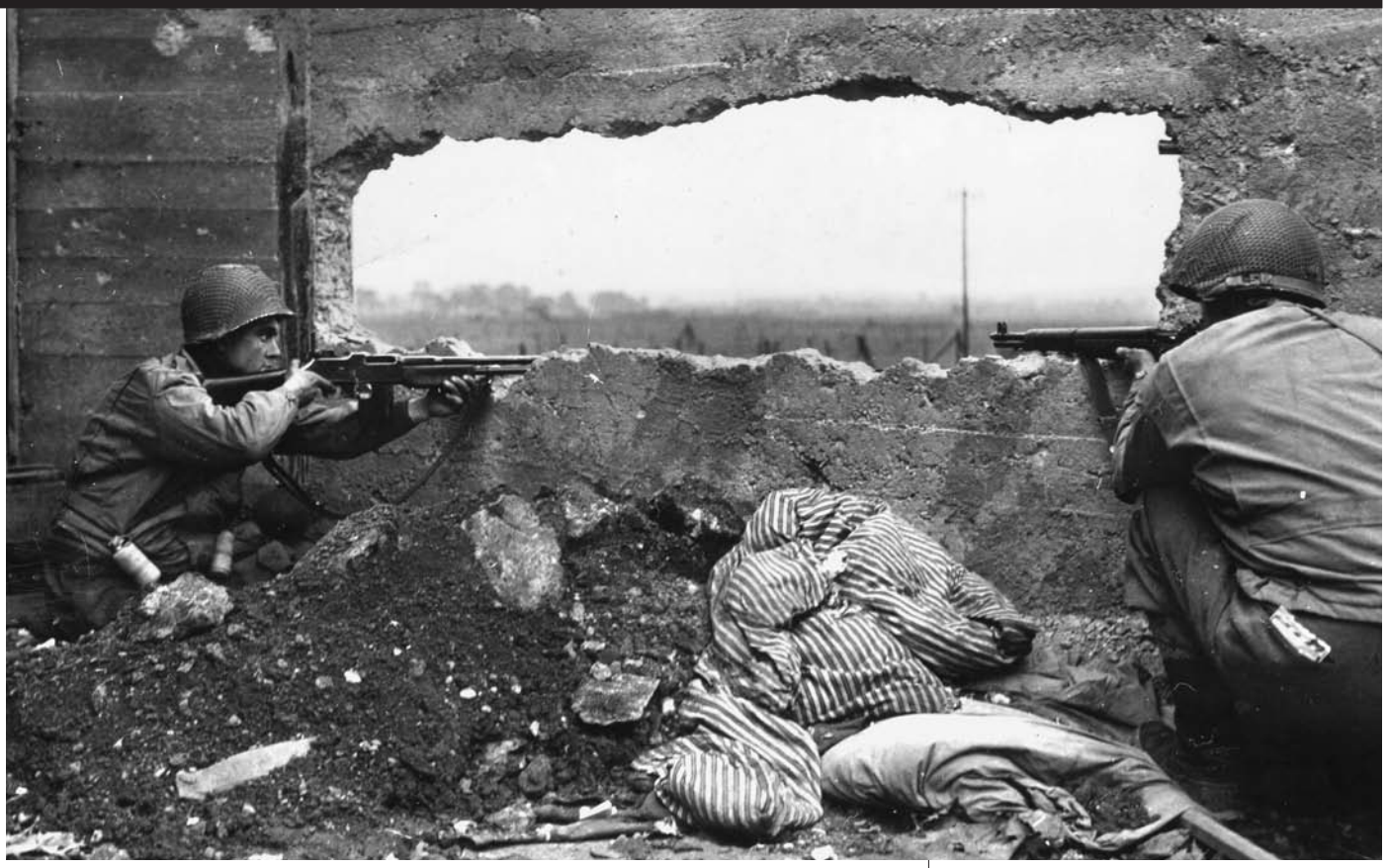
While Walker's troops focused on reducing and capturing Metz, Eddy's XII Corps began the arduous task of slowly driving the Germans east toward the West Wall. After Eddy's three infantry divisions established bridgeheads on the east bank of the Seille on the first day, Wood's 4th Armored Division and Maj. Gen. Robert Grow's 6th Armored Division would pass through the XXI Corps infantry on the right and left flanks, respectively. The plan called for Grow to cover Irwin's right flank and for Wood to push toward the Saar River and secure a crossing south of Saaregemund in preparation for a later attack on the West Wall.

Bradley initially intended for Hodges's First Army to attack toward the Ruhr in late October, and Patton's Third Army to renew its attack toward the West Wall and the Saar region after Hodges. When it became clear to Bradley that Hodges would not be ready to attack in that time frame, Bradley turned to Patton. When asked how soon he could move, Patton replied that he could attack as soon as November 8, and perhaps earlier if the weather permitted.

Patton was counting heavily on the Air Force for support in the coming campaign to soften up the enemy's fortifications and frontline positions prior to his troops shoving off. When Patton met with Brig. Gen. Otto Weyland on November 2, he designated the Metz fortress and the Delme Ridge opposite Eddy's left flank as primary targets for air strikes. However, commitments to other sectors prevented the XIX Tactical Air Command, led by Weyland, from providing the Third Army with the same level of support it had received from the command in August and September. Whereas the XIX TAC flew 12,000 sorties in support of the Third Army in August, it would only able to carry out 3,500 during November.

On the eve of the offensive, Patton's Third Army had a three-to-one advantage in troop strength over Knobelsdorff's First Army. Patton's army had 250,000 men, while the First Army had about 86,000. The Third Army also had a decisive advantage in all types of equipment, including tanks, artillery, and support vehicles. However, Third Army was hampered by an acute shortage of fuel and ammunition.

Although the fuel situation was remedied before the offensive began, the ammunition shortage was never resolved. The Third Army had learned early in the Lorraine fighting to make good use of captured artillery and ammunition when the opportunity presented itself. Eddy's three infantry divisions were deployed forward over a 30-mile front. Maj. Gen. Horace McBride's 80th Division was on the left, Maj. Gen. Paul Baade's 35th Division in the center, and Maj. Gen. Willard Paul's 26th Division on the right. Behind them, two armored divisions waited to assume the lead once bridgeheads were established over the Seille River.



A 90th Infantry Division GI with a Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) and his buddy with an M-1 Garand keep a sharp lookout through a hole blasted in a concrete wall near the town of Maizieres-les-Metz, October 1944.

Once the fuel began to arrive at the railhead in Nancy during the first week of November, the only thing holding the Third Army back was the inclement weather. Heavy rains transformed fields into quagmires, swept bridges off their moorings, and made existence miserable for GIs who lacked the most basic foul-weather gear. Shortages of galoshes and waterproof shoepacs caused an epidemic of trench foot.

Patton spent the first few days of November on the eve of the attack driving through torrential downpours from one division to the next, where he addressed officers and noncoms. Although some veteran units had heard his rousing, eve-of-battle speeches before, like the new troops hearing it for the first time they drank it up like a refreshing beverage. Patton invoked God's will and power for the Allies' virtuous cause and, in the same breath, spat and cursed the Huns as bastards deserving the horrible ends they would meet at the hands of his troops.

The weather did everything it could to foil Third Army's plans. Continuous rains the following two days led Patton to postpone the attack, but he resolved on November 7 that the attack would go forward the following day whether or not the rain stopped, and his staff issued orders to Eddy's XII Corps to prepare to attack the following morning. Anticipating a Third Army offensive, Hitler issued orders that same day that the garrison in Metz was to fight to the last man.

The terrain through which the XII Corps would attack favored the Germans. After the American infantry had bridged the Seille, it would have to drive the Germans from heavily forested ridges and plateaus that lay astride the only two main roads that led northeast toward the Saar. The infantry's primary job would be clearing the enemy from dugouts and bunkers along the ridges, while the armor would deal with enemy road blocks and strong points on the primary and secondary roads.

McBride's initial objective on the left flank was to clear the Germans from the Delme Ridge and then support Grow's 6th Armored in its push to the important crossroads of Faulquemont, situated 20 miles away. In the center, Baade would have to pry the Germans from the Forest of Chateau-Salins on the Morhange plateau and assist Combat Command A of Wood's 4th Armored Division in clearing the road from Chateau-Salins to Morhange. On the XII Corps' right flank, Paul would need to clear the Germans from the heavily wooded Dieuze plateau, thereby outflanking the strong enemy garrison in the town of Dieuze astride the Moyenvic-Mittersheim road.

As if in defiance of the foul weather, 37 battalions of field artillery supporting Eddy's XII Corps opened fire on German positions beyond the Seille in the predawn hours of November 8. More than 30,000 rounds screamed down on enemy batteries, command posts, and assembly points in preparation for the infantry assault, which began at first light of day. As if on cue, the skies temporarily cleared, and the infantry regiments jumped off toward their objectives. Overhead, P-47s streaked east

to plaster enemy troop concentrations and headquarters with their potent combination of rockets and bombs. "I hope," Patton wrote to his wife, "they killed a lot of generals."

The Germans, believing that the muddy conditions of the landscape prevented a front-wide attack by the Americans, had grown complacent in the previous fortnight and were taken by surprise by Eddy's assault. On Eddy's right flank, Paul's 26th Division easily captured the Seille crossing at Moyenvic, but was stopped cold for 72 hours by elements of Philippi's 361st Volksgrenadier Division, backed by mortars and howitzers, atop Hill 310 at the western end of the Dieuze plateau.

Elsewhere along the XII Corps front the fighting went better and, by the end of the day, enough Seille crossings were in friendly hands to enable Eddy to order his two armored divisions to pass through the infantry on the second day of battle.

On Patton's left wing opposite Metz, the fighting unfolded more slowly because of the difficulties encountered trying to cross the flooded Moselle. Patton had directed that the XX Corps' attack begin on November 9, one day after Eddy's attack on the right.

Van Fleet's 90th Infantry Division was under orders to cross the Moselle 23 miles north of Metz and begin a wide envelopment of the city from the north. Two locations, Cattenom and Malling, were chosen as the crossing points for the 358th and 359th Regiments, respectively.

The 357th, which followed after the bridgehead was secured, was under orders to push south along a forested ridge, clearing the enemy from 19 lightly defended Maginot forts. The 359th was to protect the division's left flank against German counterattacks, while the 358th was to clear the enemy from several forts guarding the east bank of the Moselle, the most imposing of which was Königsmacker, opposite Cattenom. The division's ultimate objective was to push 16 miles south through enemy-infested territory and link up with Irwin's 5th Division.

Van Fleet's three regiments faced two

French civilians (left) receive provisions from members of a tank-destroyer unit in Metz, November 21, 1944. The M-10 tank destroyer pictured, built onto the same chassis used by M-4 Shermans, mounts a .50-caliber machine gun and a 3-inch main gun in its open-top turret.

second-rate German infantry divisions—the 416th and the 19th Volksgrenadier Divisions. Worried over their ability to face the Americans in combat, Balck had requested from Commander in Chief West General Feldmarschal Gerd von Rundstedt additional forces to buttress the First Army's right flank. In response, Rundstedt released two battalions of Generalleutnant Paul Schurmann's veteran 25th Panzergrenadier Division as a reserve for the First Army's right flank. In preparation for the American attack, Balck had instructed the two infantry divisions north of Metz to establish a line of battle well back from the river and to engage the Americans in the early hours of the attack from a distance with artillery and mortars.

Shortly after midnight on November 9, soldiers of the 359th, weighted down in full gear, manhandled their assault craft through the marsh along the Moselle's west bank in preparation for the crossing to Malling. A powerful current swept a few of the boats off their course, but the majority made it across without incident.

Despite rising waters as a result of heavy rains, Van Fleet was able to get eight battalions across the Moselle and by nightfall they had pushed two miles inland in some places. To support the troops in case of a German armored attack, engineers constructed a special raft in which they were able to ferry across several 57mm antitank guns.

Some units were still engaged in trying to capture the Metz forts. On the frigid morning of November 9, 1944, two infantry companies of the 378th Infantry Regiment, 95th Infantry Division, crept silently through the woods at the base of a large hill on the east bank of the Moselle. Their objective was a well-concealed fort known as Königsmacker that stood watch over a key section of the river 20 miles north of Metz.

Königsmacker's 300-strong garrison from the 19th Volksgrenadier Division was quartered in underground bunkers from which they operated a battery of four 100mm guns encased in steel turrets. The battery's turrets and various concrete and steel observation posts and blockhouses were the only features visible aboveground. It blocked the route assigned to Van Fleet's 90th Division, which was to lead the northern pincer of Patton's double envelopment around Metz, and needed to be neutralized. It was the job of the men of Companies A and B of the 1st Battalion, 378th Infantry Regiment, 95th Infantry Division, to clear the enemy from those structures and also from the underground bunkers.

Just a few hours before, in the predawn darkness, the men had paddled rubber assault boats across the wide river and landed on the east bank unopposed. When the men reached the fort's barbed-wire perimeter, Bangalore torpedoes were brought forward to breach the obstacle. After a series of staccato explosions, the men rushed the fort.

As the men of the platoon dropped over the parapet on the northwest side of the pentagon-shaped fort, they surprised about half a dozen German soldiers. "One jumped for a machine gun, and the sergeant killed him—fortunately," recalled Lieutenant Harris Neil, of Company A, 378th Infantry. "The others ran off down a trench and started throwing hand grenades at us. So for a while we had quite a hand-grenade battle—mostly us throwing their hand grenades back at them."

A three-day struggle for control of the fort was under way.

"Our job was to get the Jerries underground and keep them there," Neil said. "We wanted to get them underground while we stayed on top and then blast them from one part of the fort to another."

The Americans braved enemy small-arms fire from within the fort and also mortar and howitzer fire from nearby supporting positions throughout the ordeal. Using new fortress-fighting techniques refined during weeks leading up to the offensive, the men of the 1st Battalion, 378th Infantry, eventually drove the garrison from the fort. They did so in part by collapsing tunnel entrances with satchel charges and by pouring gasoline into ventilation shafts which they then ignited with phosphorus grenades. The road was now open for the 90th Division's eastward drive.

Eddy's XII Corps troops fought weather conditions just as determined to defeat them as the Germans. After a partial clearing on the first day of the offensive, the temperature in southern Lorraine dropped precipitously on the second day of the assault. For the next week, precipitation alternated between snow and rain. As a result, U.S. troops, still clad in summer uniforms, found themselves soaked to the bone as they trudged forward along muddy roads past farm fields where manure heaps burned their nostrils with an acrid smell. In some places, troops marching overland found themselves slogging through mud up to their knees. As a result of the conditions, hundreds of cases of trench foot were reported each day. The 26th Division alone reported 3,000 cases of trench foot during the November offensive, Patton said.

Tankmen from the 3rd Tank Battalion, 10th Armored Division, take a well-deserved respite from days of nonstop combat near Metz.

On the second day of the attack, tank formations from two armored divisions rumbled over the Seille River. Eddy committed all of Grow's 6th Armored Division to his left flank, where it could support McBride's 80th Division and also Irwin's 5th Division of Walker's Corps as it closed the southern pincer around Metz. Eddy divided the two combat commands that formed Wood's 4th Armored Division evenly between the XII Corps center and right. Brig. Gen. Holmes Dager's CCB of 4th Armored passed through the forward line of Baade's 35th Infantry Division on November 9, and Colonel Creighton Abrams's CCA, also of 4th Armored, joined Paul's 26th Infantry Division the following day.

As the American tanks pushed forward, various Kampfgruppen of Wiethersheim's 11th Panzer Division moved into position to counter the American thrusts. Wood's two combat commands advanced east in two columns along parallel roads to speed their advance. Like a ghost in the night, one of Wiethersheim's Kampfgruppen struck a portion of Dager's command in the early hours of November 10 at the village of Viviers. For 48 hours, the two sides engaged in a protracted fight in the Viviers-Fonteny area before the German armor broke off the action by executing an orderly withdrawal. By that time, enemy infantry in the XII Corps' center had quit the Forest of Chateau-Salins and begun falling back toward Morhange.

With the German 48th Division in full retreat less than three days into the offensive, Grow's tank columns pressed ahead as fast as possible in an effort to reach the Nied Française River before the Germans had a chance to reorganize behind it. A sharp engagement unfolded on November 11 at Hans-sur-Nied when a dozen German 88s opened fire on Grow's CCA as it approached the town's bridge over the river. Counterfire from U.S. self-propelled

artillery silenced the enemy batteries, allowing a portion of the column to establish a shallow bridgehead on the east bank that was expanded the next day. By then, the 48th Division had disintegrated, leaving a dangerous gap in the First Army's line. To remedy the situation, Balck shifted Generalleutnant Edgar Feuchtinger's 21st Panzer and General Major August Wellm's 36th Volksgrenadier Division from other sectors of Army Group G to plug the gap.

Another of Wiethersheim's Kampfgruppen, comprising 10 Panther tanks and a battalion of panzergrenadiers, trapped a battalion from Paul's 104th Infantry Regiment in the town of Rodalbe on the Dieuze plateau on November 12. When the GIs took refuge in the cellars of the towns' homes to await reinforcements, the Panthers fired at the positions at point-blank range with ghastly results. Rodalbe, situated less than two miles south of Morhange, was of great importance to the Germans, and they defended the area tenaciously for nearly a week.

McBride's infantry had little trouble dislodging the weak German 48th Division from the Delme Ridge in the first two days of the offensive. However, the going was rough for the 317th Infantry Regiment, deployed on the XII Corps' left flank, which found itself up against the experienced 17th Panzergrenadier Division. Working in concert with McBride's infantry, Grow's 6th Armored had as its primary objective capturing the strategic crossroads town of Faulquemont southeast of Metz.

Eddy temporarily halted the advance of his frozen, exhausted infantry divisions on November 12 to protect his left flank and also to adjust for a narrowing of the front resulting from topography. In essence, Baade's 35th Division in the center was squeezed out of the fighting as a result of the narrowing of the front. When Patton learned that Eddy's infantry was resting in place, he ordered his subordinate to resume the attack and secure Faulquemont. "It's easier to defeat the Germans there than on the Saar or on the West Wall," Patton admonished.

While Wood's combat commands fought

Gun crewmen use the Moselle River to wash the mud off their 57mm antitank weapon. The gun had a muzzle velocity of about 3,000 feet per minute and the antitank round could penetrate two inches of armor plate at 100 yards, but was virtually useless against the thicker frontal armor found on most panzers.

the Germans along the roadways, the infantry had the unpleasant task of clearing them acre by acre from vast tracts of forest. On the Dieuze plateau, Paul's 328th Infantry Regiment had to pry elements of Philippi's 361st Volksgrenadier Division from the heavily wooded Koecking Ridge north of the town of Dieuze; the forested tract stretched for five miles across the Dieuze plateau. The heavy rains of the preceding weeks had not spared the forest floor, which like the nearby valleys, was saturated and contained pools of mud that slowed the advance.

Shivering in the dark, dank woods, the GIs were halted frequently by fire from German pillboxes and machine-gun nests. Worse still, they were shelled around the clock by enemy artillery stationed at Dieuze. The fighting in the woods lasted for nearly 10 days, and the deciding factor was the intervention of Abrams's tanks and armored infantry late in the battle that helped push the enemy from the sprawling forest.

Feuchtinger's 21st Panzer and Wellm's 36th Volksgrenadier Divisions reached the battlefield on November 13 and immediately counterattacked American forces on the east side of the Nied-Française. The 21st Panzer went into action first on the 13th against Grow's CCB at Bazancourt west of Faulquemont, but was repulsed by the Americans.

The main battle for Faulquemont unfolded over November 14-16 between Grow's CCA and Wellm's infantry in the countryside south of the town. American field artillery beat back repeated assaults by German infantry, and on the last day of the battle Faulquemont was taken by an American tank attack.

Walker had previously determined that he could not depend solely on the crossing points in Van Fleet's sector, and therefore had ordered Twaddle to send a battalion from the 95th Division across the Moselle in assault boats the same night to secure a bridgehead in the Thionville sector. While the bulk of Twaddle's infantry kept the Germans inside the Metz forts on the west bank pinned in place, the 1st Battalion, 377th Infantry, later reinforced by the 2nd Battalion, 378th Infantry, landed south of Thionville and in the following days attacked north and capturied Fort Illange.

Morris's 10th Armored Division was supposed to cross on the second day of Walker's attack but by that time the Moselle had flooded its banks and inundated the expansive marshland on the west bank. Despite numerous obstacles, Walker's engineers

worked feverishly to complete a pontoon bridge at Malling, despite being under German artillery fire.

On November 11, the day Königsmacker fell to the Americans, the 357th attacked the north end of the ridge containing the Maginot forts. That evening, the engineers completed the Malling bridge in preparation for the crossing of the 90th Division's support battalions.

Although Balck was willing to leave the 462nd Volksgrenadier Division to its fate inside the Metz fortress, he was not willing to risk having any of the First Army's other divisions surrounded during the American advance. To prevent this, he planned to establish a new battle line farther east once the situation in Metz became dire.

On the night of November 11, Nazi Party members and First Army administrative personnel stationed in Metz drove east to safety in Citroëns and Renaults commandeered from the city's residents. South of the city, the 17th SS Panzergrenadier Division fell back to a new position behind the Nied-Française.

The first major counterattack by German reserves against Van Fleet's bridgehead occurred on November 12. In the predawn hours, in which exhausted GIs shivered in their freezing foxholes, 10 German tanks and assault guns of the 25th Panzergrenadier Division attacked Kerling in an effort to recapture the bridge crossing at Malling.

The Germans easily scattered American outposts at Kerling. From that point, one column proceeded on the main road toward Petite-Hettange, while another portion turned south to engage the 2nd Battalion, 359th Infantry, which had been firing on the German flank from protected positions at the edge of the Forest of Petite-Hettange. The battalion's mortar and machine-gun companies fought valiantly despite being cut off from reinforcements. Company H's Sergeant Forrest Everhart single-handedly engaged the enemy in a 30-minute grenade duel that kept his company from being overrun. For these actions, Everhart received the Medal of Honor.

Meanwhile, American antitank guns and a scratch force of support personnel guarding the approaches to Petite-Hettange remained in action long enough to check the German advance until the American infantry was reinforced by two American M-18 Hellcats that roared into battle at dawn across the Malling bridge. The arrival of the American armor compelled the Germans to break off the action in midmorning. By then the Germans had lost nine tanks and assault guns and suffered 400 casualties.

Members of the 5th and 95th Infantry Divisions shake hands after sealing off the last escape route of German troops in Metz, November 22, 1944.

On November 13, Germans counterattacked Twaddle's bridgehead at Uckange, forcing the Americans to seek cover in the houses and stores of two towns, Bertrange and Imeldange, south of Thionville. German half-tracks whirled through the streets of the two towns spraying American positions with machine-gun and small-arms fire until American long-range artillery on the west bank and reinforcements compelled them to break off the attack.

The bridges at Malling and Cattenom were constantly under fire from German long-range guns. When the bridges were damaged, tanks and other vehicles were ferried to the east bank on large rafts. To the south, Walker's engineers worked tirelessly to complete a third bridge in the safety of the 95th Division's bridgehead at Thionville. The triple Bailey bridge at Thionville was completed on November 14 and, by that time, troops in the two bridgeheads north of Metz had linked up.

Hitler had dispatched Generalleutnant Heinrich Kittel, an expert on fortress warfare, from the Eastern Front to Metz to advise Luebbe how to strengthen its defenses for a final showdown with the Third Army. Kittel arrived on November 8, and when Luebbe suffered a stroke on the 14th, Kittel assumed command, vowing to fulfill Hitler's orders that the garrison fight to the last man. Once in charge, Kittel decided that he would concentrate manpower and resources to hold four of Metz's strongest forts—Driant, Jeanne d'Arc, Plappeville, and St. Quentin—all of which were located on the west bank. That evening, the last supply train arrived in Metz from the east. It contained several weeks' rations and 48 additional artillery pieces.

On November 15, Morris instructed his 10th Armored Division's CCA to cross at Thionville and CCB to cross at Malling. CCA promptly joined forces with the 357th Infantry and helped it cut two major roads into Metz from the northeast. Meanwhile, CCB linked up with the 359th Infantry and began clearing enemy positions along a net-

work of secondary roads that led east toward Merzig, an important objective in the northwest corner of the Saar.

The Germans launched their last major counterattack against the XX Corps' bridgeheads the same day Morris's armor began crossing the Moselle. That morning a strong Kampfgruppe comprising tanks, assault guns, and three battalions of infantry fought its way into Distroff, about five miles east of Thionville, where it grappled with Van Fleet's 358th Infantry. The fighting raged throughout the morning until American reinforcements arrived and, backed by artillery, compelled the enemy to withdraw at midday.

Also on the 15th, Walker gave Twaddle command of U.S. forces converging on Metz from the north. Twaddle, in turn, appointed Colonel Robert Bacon, commanding officer of the 359th Infantry Regiment, 90th Division, to lead a mechanized task force south along the east bank of the Moselle toward Metz. Two days later, Task Force Bacon had reached the northern outskirts of the city and began battering into submission the enemy garrison at Fort St. Julien using the 150mm self-propelled artillery accompanying the task force.

To the south, Irwin's 5th Infantry Division had joined the attack on November 9, advancing from its narrow bridgehead at Arnaville, which had been secured during the September fighting. Irwin's objective was to drive 10 miles to the Nied-Française River and seize the high ground southwest of Metz. In so doing, he would be responsible for severing four major roads into Metz from the south and also the rail line to Saarbrucken.

More than 1,200 B-17s and B-24s pounded the southern ring of forts surrounding Metz and enemy assembly points farther east in preparation for Irwin's advance. Although the bombs did little damage to the fortifications, they disrupted the communications assets of the 17th Panzergrenadier Division, enabling Irwin's 2nd Regiment to establish a bridgehead on the east bank of the Nied-Française at Ancerville on November 12.

Alarmed at the speed with which the Americans were advancing directly south of Metz, Balck ordered Feuchtinger's 21st Panzer to assist the 17th Division in a counterattack. In anticipation of stiffening German resistance, Grow's CCB had shifted north to assist Irwin, and when the Germans launched a night attack on November 13 at Sanry-sur-Nied, they were repulsed by the Americans, who had vastly greater resources in armor and artillery.

While the 2nd Regiment was engaged with the enemy along the Nied-Française, Irwin's other two regiments spent several days clearing the enemy from various forts and other fortified positions south of the city. By November 15, Irwin's units regrouped for a concentrated attack on the city. Because they had more experience with fortress fighting, Walker made a last-minute decision to entrust Irwin's troops, rather than Twaddle's, with the capture of the city.

Irwin's 10th and 11th Regiments reached the southern outskirts of Metz on the afternoon of November 17. The 11th became hotly engaged with enemy machine-gun units

Time-Life Pictures/Getty Images

ABOVE: Soldiers from the 26th Infantry Division carry an American flag to plant atop the ramparts after Fort Jeanne d'Arc, the last German-held fort at Metz to capitulate. OPPOSITE: Two German medics, carrying a Red Cross flag for protection, surrender to American troops at Metz, November 22, 1944.

in the hangars at Frescaty airfield while the 10th slipped around to the east and attacked Fort Queuleu, whose garrison put up a determined fight. Meanwhile, Walker told Irwin to instruct the 2nd Regiment to turn north from the Nied-Française and cut the roads through which enemy units were slipping away east to safety.

When the Americans reached the outskirts of the city, Kittel ordered the bridges connecting garrison units on opposite sides of the Moselle blown and issued orders to his soldiers to defend every block and building in the city. Much to his chagrin, the troops within the city itself chose instead to surrender to Patton's men after a half-hearted fight.

Rather than assault forts on the west bank, as Irwin's and Van Fleet's men were doing with the ones on the east bank, Walker ordered the most formidable of them contained until they capitulated. It would be nearly a month before the last holdout of the Metz defenses, Fort Jeanne d'Arc, surrendered to the Americans.

On November 19, the two pincers converging behind Metz as part of Patton's double envelopment finally met up at Pont Marais about 10 miles west of the city, not far from Boulay-Moselle, the point originally designated for the rendezvous. That same day, Van Fleet's infantry, marching south, reached the Nied-Française and managed to cut the last roads leading into Metz.

With Metz at last secured, Walker ordered Van Fleet to halt any further advance by his units pending a general regrouping for a push west to the Saar and the West Wall. The 5th Division was able to secure the city with ease, given that the enemy troops inside the city had discarded their weapons and greeted the victors with raised hands.

On November 25, with his troops having rounded up about 4,000 prisoners from the city and the weaker forts, Patton entered the city in a triumphal procession more reminiscent of a conqueror from antiquity than of a 20th-century general. His oratory equaled the pomp with which he had entered the city: "Your deeds in the battle of Metz will fill pages of history for a thousand years," he told his men. To his credit, "Old Blood and Guts" had good reason to boast, as he was the first commander to capture Metz since Attila the Hun had entered the city in AD 415.

By the end of November, only four forts—the very ones that Kittel had chosen to strengthen when he assumed command—were still occupied by German forces. But by December 8, the garrisons at Forts St. Quentin, Plappeville, and Driant had all surrendered, and on December 13 the last stronghold, Fort Jeanne d'Arc, also surrendered to the Americans. From those forts, another 6,000 prisoners were taken, raising to 10,000 the number of troops captured from the forts in the Metz pocket.

Walker had saved many American lives by relying on his corps' powerful long-range guns to pound the enemy into submission. Patton and his corps and division commanders reaped the rewards of the careful planning they had done the month before—something that had been woefully absent from the Third Army's effort in September—to get all of the Third Army's divisions into the fight on the east bank of the Moselle.

An even greater measure of credit goes to men in the ranks who fought past the point of exhaustion in miserable weather against an enemy who excelled at defensive warfare. □

The last part of this three-part series on Patton in Lorraine will focus on the Third Army's push to the West Wall following the fall of Metz. After the Third Army had established a bridgehead on the east bank of the Saar River in early December, Patton began crafting final plans for breaching the wall. Those plans were derailed when the Germans launched a full-scale attack into the Ardennes on December 16. As a result, Patton received orders to shift north and counterattack the southern part of the bulge created by the enemy offensive. Consequently, the Third Army's operations in Lorraine drew to an abrupt close.

Lost OPPORTUNITY

BY ERIC HAMMEL

THE FIRST NAVAL BATTLE OF SAVO ISLAND GAVE THE U.S. NAVY ITS WORST DEFEAT.

A UNITED STATES naval task force bearing the U.S. 1st Marine Division arrived off Guadalcanal, in the eastern Solomon Islands, on the morning of August 7, 1942, and launched the first American offensive operation of World War II. In only two days, the Marines captured the uncompleted Japanese airfield at Lunga on Guadalcanal, which was the primary target of the invasion, as well as island bastions to the north of and around Tulagi harbor. Japanese air attacks were mounted on August 7 and 8 from Rabaul, 600 miles to the northeast. The Japanese bombers, which damaged a transport and a destroyer, were routed by U.S. Navy fighters from three aircraft carriers that guarded the invasion fleet.

Vice Admiral Gunichi Mikawa was commander of the newly formed Eighth Fleet, an Imperial Japanese Navy mixed cruiser and destroyer force based at Rabaul. It was his job to defend the Solomons against Allied incursions and to prepare to spearhead a new drive southeastward, toward the New Hebrides.

Fragmentary reports of the battle from Tulagi on August 7—followed by immediate and lasting silence—caused a division of opinion between Admiral Mikawa and his Imperial Army counterpart, Lt. Gen. Harukichi Hyakutake, commander of the newly formed 17th Army, a corps-sized infantry force headquartered in Rabaul but charged with securing New Guinea.

The Imperial Army had no responsibility for events in the Solomon Islands, which were under the control of the Imperial Navy, so perhaps Hyakutake was serving his own interests when he rated the incursion at Tulagi as a mere raid. He refused to provide Admiral Mikawa with troops for an immediate counterblow.

U.S. Navy

Deadly brackets: American cruisers *Quincy*, *Astoria*, and *Vincennes* are hit by salvoes of enemy torpedos and naval fire and quickly put out of action early on August 9, 1942, as depicted in this painting by John Hamilton. INSET: Doing more with less: Vice Admiral Gunichi Mikawa, commander of Japan's Eighth Fleet.

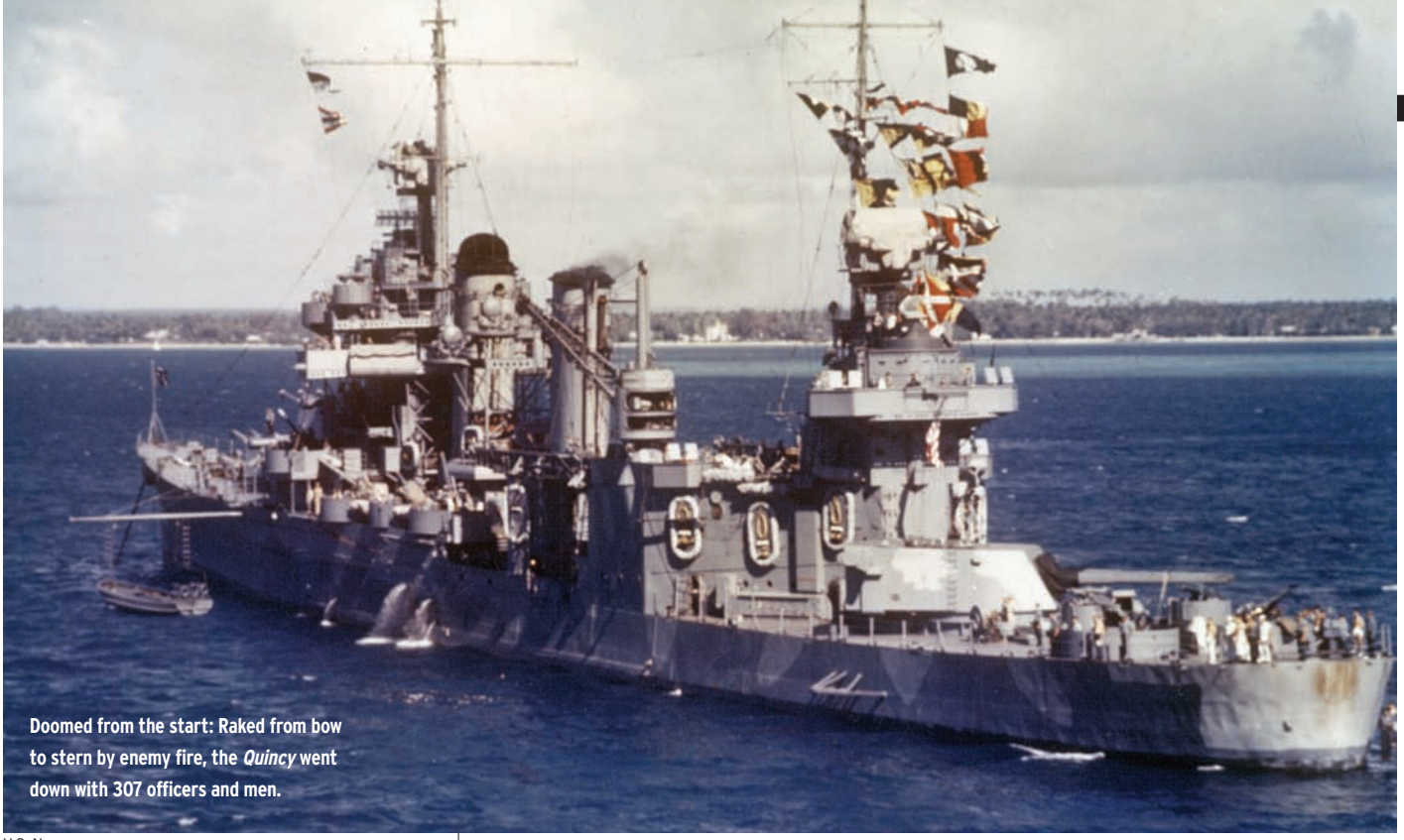
Though Mikawa was operating in a virtual information vacuum, he nevertheless divined the enormity of the challenge. At the very least, he reasoned, duty demanded that he strike swiftly and in force. If his estimate of enemy intentions proved to be overblown, little harm would have been done. He ordered every available bluejacket in Rabaul to be armed with infantry weapons and formed into a provisional infantry battalion. In the end, only 410 such troops could be found, and not as many rifles. The minuscule force was sent south aboard a small cargo ship while Mikawa redoubled his efforts to mount a more meaningful response.

An urgent message was dispatched to the Naval General Staff in Tokyo, requesting permission to mount a surface attack on the Allied fleet the following night, August 8.

The Imperial Navy's chief of staff, Admiral Osami Nagano, considered a night surface attack too audacious; Mikawa had few warships while the Allies seemed to have many, and the transports were certain to be closely guarded. Still, Nagano deferred to Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, commander in chief of the Combined Fleet, the Navy's operational arm. Yamamoto, who was headquartered at Truk, knew Mikawa to be a cautious man and respected his judgment. He radioed his approval: "Wish your fleet success."

Mikawa, who had been admonished to oversee the foray from Rabaul, boarded his flagship, the heavy cruiser *Chokai*, on the afternoon of August 7 and ordered the remainder of

National Archives



Doomed from the start: Raked from bow to stern by enemy fire, the *Quincy* went down with 307 officers and men.

U.S. Navy

the Eighth Fleet to stand south through St. George Channel. The force comprised five heavy cruisers, two light cruisers, and one fleet destroyer.

The waters were poorly charted, and the going was slow. Though Mikawa and his staff navigator spent long hours poring over the few charts they had at their disposal, the day was lost. Mikawa feared discovery by Allied reconnaissance aircraft, so he decided to remain north of Bougainville until the late afternoon of August 8, when he would steam at all possible speed through St. George Channel, between the double chain of islands—soon to be known as "the Slot"—and launch his attack after rounding Savo, just to the west of the presumed Allied fleet anchorage off Lunga. The Slot, though narrow and restricted, presented the surest means for arriving off Savo at a favorable hour. The risk of discovery was great, but speed was of the essence.

Rear Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, the invasion fleet commander, received a message from the north late on the afternoon of August 7: "Two destroyers and three larger ships of unknown type heading [southeast] at high speed eight miles west of Cape St. George."

The source of the message was an American submarine charged with guarding the waters around the Slot. The boat had had barely enough time to avoid being run down by the Japanese column, much less launch a torpedo attack.

The Eighth Fleet reached Bougainville by dawn on August 8 and launched four float reconnaissance planes to probe the Allied anchorage. The Japanese warships then scattered to confound routine Allied reconnaissance flights in the area.

Chokai was spotted at 10:20 AM by a Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) patrol bomber, which circled overhead for a time. Admiral Mikawa reversed course until the Australians left, hopefully convinced that the Japanese cruiser was heading back to Rabaul. Nevertheless, when a second RAAF bomber appeared, Mikawa felt he had little to lose, so he ordered his force to re-form and head through the Slot toward Savo.

In the meantime, one of the Japanese floatplanes returned to report that 18 transports, six cruisers, 19 destroyers, and a battleship were arrayed around Tulagi, Savo, and the northern coast of Guadalcanal. It seemed to Mikawa that he was outnumbered, 26 warships to eight. But the reconnaissance pilot added that the Allied warships were split into three groups, and that gave the Japanese admiral hope that he could destroy at least one battle force before the others could join the fight. The Eighth Fleet steamed on, entering the Slot itself late in the afternoon. The fleet navigator estimated that the cruiser column would arrive off Savo at midnight.

The Eighth Fleet had been formed only a week earlier and had never before operated as a unit, so the simplest of battle plans had to be promulgated. *Chokai*'s signal lamp blinked Admiral Mikawa's orders to the other vessels at 4:30 PM: "We will proceed from south of Savo Island and torpedo the enemy main force in front of the Guadalcanal anchorage, after which we will turn toward the Tulagi forward area to shell and torpedo the enemy. We will withdraw north of Savo." The warships were ordered to stream white sleeves from both wings of their bridges for identification.

Minutes before dusk, just as the danger of discovery was nearly past, one of *Chokai*'s lookouts spotted a masthead to starboard. The fleet sprang to action, sirens wailing, guns tracking the target, which was identified as a friendly seaplane tender bound for New Georgia, a bit farther to starboard.

Just as the Eighth Fleet left the friendly ship astern, Maj. Gen. Alexander Archer Vandegrift, ashore on Red Beach with the main body of his 1st Marine Division, was asked

to join Rear Admiral Kelly Turner and Rear Admiral Victor Crutchley, the British commander of the screen warships, aboard Turner's flagship for urgent consultations.

Only minutes earlier, Turner had heard from Vice Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher, the carrier flotilla commander: "Fighter plane strength reduced from 99 to 78. In view of the large number of enemy torpedo planes and bombers in the area, I recommend the immediate withdrawal of my carriers. Request tankers sent forward immediately as fuel is running low." Fletcher was pulling out even earlier than he had thought he might during the run-up to the invasion.

Though he had no inkling as to its purpose, Admiral Crutchley sensed a note of urgency in Turner's summons. The giant, red-bearded Briton precipitously ordered his flagship, the heavy cruiser *Australia,* to leave the screening force south of Savo and follow Guadalcanal's northern coastline to the main fleet anchorage off Lunga.

The Allied screen had been informally divided into three groups. Southern Force, with which *Australia* had been on station, was reduced to two cruisers and two destroyers. Its patrol sector lay between Savo and Cape Esperance at the southern entrance to the channel. Another group, Northern Force, composed of three cruisers and several destroyers, patrolled the northern entrance, between Savo and Florida Island. The third group, Eastern Force, composed of a pair each of light cruisers and destroyers, patrolled the eastern extremity of the anchorage. Crutchley exercised direct tactical control over all three groups and had designated no subordinate commanders.

National Archives

Surprised brass: Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner (left) and USMC Major General Alexander Vandegrift confer aboard the USS *McCawley* shortly before the Japanese attack.

His departure without word to Northern or Eastern Forces left two-thirds of his command leaderless to all practical purposes. He did inform his senior Southern Force captain that he was leaving, but did not actually leave the man in control. That officer did not even think to move his own heavy cruiser, *Chicago,* to the head of the patrol column, as convention dictated, nor did he inform any of the other captains. Captain Frederick Reifkohl, whose heavy cruiser *Vincennes* was in Northern Force and who was senior captain in the screening force, should have been left with the overall command, but he did not even know that Crutchley had left the patrol area with the flagship. The cruiser screen was left leaderless and without a plan.

Turner's meeting was late getting started. Crutchley had pulled *Australia* out of the screen in haste, but it still took two hours of poking around in the gloom for him to find Turner's flagship, the transport *McCawley.* General Vandegrift embarked in a small boat and did not find the flagship until 11 PM.

While waiting for Vandegrift, Turner and Crutchley discussed a message that had just been relayed from the air base at Milne Bay, New Guinea: An RAAF aircrew had spotted a Japanese naval force heading southeast from northern Bougainville. The message had arrived following an eight-hour delay because the pilot had waited to land before making his report. The message indicated that the Japanese force was composed of three cruisers, three destroyers, and a pair of seaplane tenders.The admirals agreed that the presence of the tenders might indicate a morning air attack. The fact that only three cruisers had been sighted was reassuring; the Japanese would not dream of launching a surface attack, particularly at night, with a force of only three escorted cruisers.

Turner knew that the Japanese would feel obliged to make some sort of gesture against his fleet, and he suspected that the Slot would be used to make an approach. Accordingly, he had requested a Navy long-range patrol bomber to search the channel that day. There was, as yet, no report, which the admirals took to be a good omen. In fact, the mission had not been undertaken.

When Vandegrift entered Turner's compartment, he noted that the two admirals seemed about to pass out from the oppressive heat. He accepted Turner's offer of a cup of coffee, then sat down to hear the bad news.

Turner told him of Fletcher's decision to leave early. Vandegrift grew livid; the carrier force commander had earlier promised to give him at least 12 hours to unload the transports—more than he now proposed. Even then, Vandegrift had had no hope of getting his division's supplies ashore. Turner repeated the news about the seaplane tenders and indicated that, lacking air cover, he too was obliged to retire at dawn; his transports were highly vulnerable to air attack.

Turner, the amphibious force commander, asked the Marine division commander for his opinion, and the general replied that the 1st Marine Division was in fair shape on Guadalcanal; he doubted that Tulagi could be adequately defended, though he admitted having no direct knowledge in that regard. Turner nodded and mentioned that he had foreseen the response, and that a fast minesweeper was standing by to carry Vandegrift to Tulagi.

Crutchley offered to take the general to the minesweeper on his way back to *Australia.* Vandegrift declined, but the Briton insisted: "Your mission is much more important than mine." The two boarded Crutchley's gig minutes before midnight. A heavy rain squall was blustering to port, separating the Northern and Southern Forces. To starboard, a red glow marked the spot where the transport *Elliott,* the victim of an aerial bomb, lay grounded and burning. As Vandegrift mounted the minesweeper's ladder, Crutchley shook his hand and said that he knew what losing the fleet meant to the Marines. "I don't

U.S. Navy

Mikawa's view: Flares illuminate *Chicago* and *Canberra,* as seen from the admiral's flagship, *Chokai.*

know as I can blame Turner for what he's doing," said the British admiral.

Gunichi Mikawa was moving in for the kill. The Japanese had any number of advantages, not the least being their ability to control events. But they lacked radar, and that, Mikawa feared, might be their undoing.

Rigorously selected and keenly trained lookouts, the finest in any navy, were capable of spotting mere shadows at eight miles, and they were equipped with the finest night binoculars in the world. In addition, three three-place spotter planes had been launched to track the Allied fleet. When Mikawa engaged Southern Force, they were to launch parachute flares to assist Japanese gun crews.

American picket destroyers near Savo heard the sound of aircraft engines as the Japanese floatplanes traversed the anchorage. Several duty officers queried higher authorities, and several issued warnings. A few did nothing. It was finally agreed that the aircraft were Fletcher's, though no one could explain what carrier aircraft might be doing over Savo in the dead of night, nor why no one had been told to expect them.

It was 11:45 PM. Admiral Crutchley was unavailable, somewhere amid the shipping, ferrying Archer Vandegrift to the minesweeper. *Australia* was routinely notified of the aircraft contact, but no one aboard felt compelled to take charge.

The Eighth Fleet was approaching Savo at 10 minutes after midnight. The conical island was ahead to port and Cape Esperance loomed to starboard when lookouts spotted a low form moving dead ahead. Gun crews swung out their batteries to cover the dark silhouette; 50 naval rifles were brought to bear in a trice.

Blue, an aging picket destroyer, routinely changed course at 12:40 AM from roughly northeast to roughly southwest, maintaining her speed at 12 knots. Visibility was good. No unusual contacts had been made by radio, radar, sonar, or sight since 11:45. The crew was at General Quarters, the highest state of alert. Lookouts had been concentrating on navigation landmarks to the east for several minutes before and during the turn, which happened to be away from the path of the Eighth Fleet. *Blue* made no movement of recognition and continued blithely on her way. It was 12:43 AM.

Blue's failure to react worried the Japanese admiral nearly to distraction. He had no idea what the American skipper's game might be, though it was easy to imagine him trying to bluff his way out of certain destruction while filling the airwaves with alarms. Mikawa chose to assume that he had not been sighted. To make certain, he dispatched his lone destroyer, *Yunagi*, to keep tabs on the seemingly blind picket. Ironically, *Blue* had been moving toward the projected Japanese track from 12:10 to 12:40 AM. Even more ironic is the fact that *Ralph Talbot*, the picket destroyer north of Savo, also had her stern to the Japanese warships as they squeezed through the passage.

Japanese lookouts perched in the masts poured down a torrent of data to fire control stations as their ships approached the Allied force. Mikawa ordered speed increased to 26 knots and released his captains to commence independent firing at any time. Torpedoes hissed into the water an instant later.

It was now 1:36. Southern Force had been firmly fixed, coming up from the southeast.

At 1:43, just as the Japanese spotter aircraft were preparing to release their flares, lookouts aboard the destroyer *Patterson* sighted a shadow in their ship's path. "Warning! Warning! Strange ships entering harbor."

It was an instant late. The parachute flares blossoming overhead silhouetted *Chicago* in Japanese gunsights. Then the Australian cruiser *Canberra* appeared. *Chokai*, only 4,500 yards distant, opened with her main batteries, *Aoba* fired from 5,500 yards, and *Furutaka* opened from 9,000 yards.

Before *Canberra*'s crew even spotted the enemy, before the Australians could train out their guns, Japanese torpedoes had blasted a great hole in the side of their ship, followed closely by the first 4.7- and 8-inch salvoes. *Canberra*'s captain fell, mortally wounded. The ship's gunnery officer died in the first blast, along with many of his shipmates. *Canberra* launched two torpedoes and got off a few 4.7-inch rounds. Then she was out of the fight, her power out, dead in the water.

Patterson surged after the enemy cruiser column while Japanese gunners put out a few disdainful salvoes in her direction. The after-gun mount was hit, and ready ammunition and powder exploded and burned. *Patterson* came on, firing at the tail cruiser *Yubari.* Suddenly it was quiet. The Japanese were beyond sight. *Patterson*'s torpedoes were still in their tubes despite the captain's order to launch them.

Destroyer *Bagley* was up next, but she had no luck. The spread of torpedoes she launched sped off uselessly to the north.

Chicago got off easier than *Canberra* by pure chance and because her lookouts had seen orange flashes at 1:42 AM—the Japanese launching torpedoes—and aircraft flares over the transports a minute later. *Canberra*'s sudden wheel to starboard from dead ahead clinched the matter. Lookouts passed word that two shadows were in sight nearby. The captain, who was just awakening from a nap, ordered his 5-inch secondary batteries to prepare to illuminate with star shells. A lookout spotted a torpedo wake to starboard at 1:46, and *Chicago* was hit a minute later, her bow blown clear off. Gunners staggered under the impact, then fired star shells in an effort to pinpoint a target—any target. The damaged cruiser tried for two minutes to range in on a pair of mysterious lighted tar-

gets ahead. One must have been the destroyer *Yunagi,* which Admiral Mikawa had detached to look after *Blue*. The second target might have been *Jarvis,* a destroyer damaged by a Japanese aerial torpedo that afternoon.

Preoccupied with licking their own wounds or coming to the aid of cripples, no one in Southern Force thought to issue an alert. The Japanese had sustained zero damage in the course of crippling a pair of cruisers and a destroyer.

Admiral Mikawa was already on the scent of the Northern Force cruisers, which were maintaining a boxlike patrol pattern north and east of Savo. American lookouts had no idea that a battle had been fought to the south because Savo's silhouette and a line of squalls between the two Allied forces obscured the view.

On glimpsing Northern Force through a break in the squall line, Mikawa ordered a course shift to east-northeast at 1:44 AM.

Chokai, in the van, made the prescribed move, as did the three heavy cruisers immediately astern. But *Furutaka,* the last of the heavies, found herself on a collision course with the cruiser ahead and veered to port, her bow aimed directly at the American cruiser line to the north. She settled on a more northerly heading at 1:47, the two light cruisers in her wake. By pure chance, the two Japanese columns were on parallel courses with the Northern Force column between them.

Patterson's voice-radio warning at 1:43 and the string of parachute flares to the south had alerted Northern Force to danger, but no one knew from where it might emerge nor, in fact, that it was approaching at all. Without hard facts, the line of cruisers maintained its 10-knot patrol speed, the helmsmen taking care to turn a square corner to the northeast at the end of the southwestern leg of the box.

Tenryu's lookouts spotted the American column at 1:46, just as their ship was turning to follow *Furutaka* to form the inadvertent second column. Word was flashed two minutes later to Admiral Mikawa, who ordered torpedoes launched immediately; 17 were away within moments. The Eighth Fleet majestically charged against the unknowing Americans, batteries swiftly swinging outboard to track targets.

Astoria, at the tail of the American column, was maintaining a routine watch. Her skipper, Captain William Greenman, was sleeping off the accumulated strain of two days on the conn. The officer of the deck, Lt. Cmdr. Jim Topper, noted slight tremors from the south, but assumed that destroyermen were relieving their anxieties by dropping depth charges on phantom submarines. The tremors were *Chokai*'s torpedoes harmlessly detonating after missing *Chicago*.

A lookout reported seeing a star shell far to port, and Jim Topper looked up in time to see a string of aircraft flares. Someone else pointed to a searchlight beam (*Chokai*'s) at 1:50. That did it! Topper called *Astoria*'s crew to General Quarters only a minute before a shell exploded just off her bow.

The main-battery spotter announced that three enemy cruisers were off the port quarter and closing, but it was 90 seconds before *Astoria*'s 8-inch guns could be trained out to port and fired at *Chokai*.

As Lt. Cmdr. Topper was passing the order to commence firing, Captain Greenman, who had been routed out of his bunk moments earlier, stepped onto the control bridge and hurriedly assessed events to that moment. "Topper," he cautioned, "I think we're firing on our own ships. Let's not get excited and act too hasty. Cease firing."

The ship's gunnery officer remained convinced that the targets were hostile; he pleaded to be allowed to resume firing. Captain Greenman assented at 1:54.

Meanwhile, *Chokai* had had time to fire four full salvoes at *Astoria,* but none had yet scored. The misses might have given the American gunners time to strike back, but the debate on *Astoria*'s bridge and the cease-fire order benefited the Japanese flagship. The fifth 8-inch salvo then ripped through the American cruiser's superstructure, and *Astoria*'s midships section

Australian War Memorial

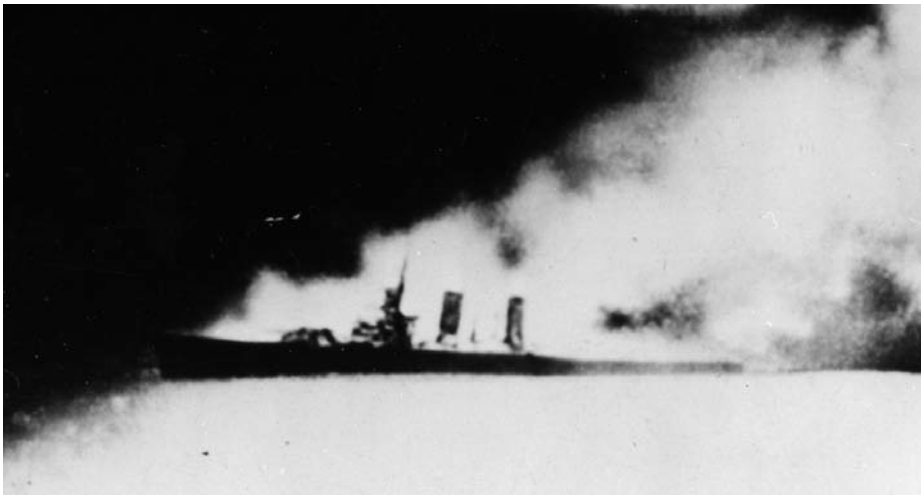
In the dark: The Australian cruiser *Canberra* conducting a night-firing drill. *Canberra* fired only a few rounds before she was left dead in the water.

burst into flames. *Chokai* blazed away as Captain Greenman firmly ordered all his guns into action.

It was too late for *Astoria*. Her communications had been destroyed, and her deck was disintegrating under the impact of repeated hits. The gun crews were severely hampered by the heat and smoke of fires; in all, *Astoria* managed to get off 11 partial 8-inch salvoes. Captain Greenman had to order an abrupt course correction to avoid

Both: U.S. Navy

ABOVE: In happier days: USS *Astoria* shown in gunnery practice, July 1942. Her captain was still looking for targets when she was hit and put out of action. BELOW: Final silhouette: USS *Quincy,* photographed from a Japanese ship, is illuminated shortly before she was sunk. OPPOSITE: Fighting till the end: *Quincy*'s captain, Samuel N. Moore, died at his duty station.



ramming *Quincy,* which was in line dead ahead. The move was unfortunate, for it brought Greenman's ship between *Quincy* and more menacing Japanese batteries.

Then the worst blow of all fell: A shell burst directly on *Astoria*'s bridge, cutting down most of the bridge watch. The helmsman managed to regain his feet and bring the cripple back on course to the northwest, but scores of sailors below decks were felled by searing flames, billowing smoke, and superheated steam. The cruiser slowed to barely seven knots. Fires were raging down her entire length, but her crew continued to fight; Turret 2's last salvo caught *Chokai*'s forward turret. But then *Astoria* was left behind.

Quincy was already getting hit. The watch had had warnings and hints identical to those registered aboard *Astoria,* but they too had helped little. On receiving *Patterson*'s warning, the officer of the deck had called Captain Samuel Moore from his emergency cabin, abaft the bridge, where he was resting. Just as Moore appeared on the bridge, the second cruiser in the Japanese starboard column, *Aoba,* fixed his ship in her main searchlight battery and pumped several rounds into the water beside *Quincy*'s bow. Moore ordered his gunners to "fire at the ships with the searchlights on."

When the guns did not bear on the targets quickly enough, Moore again ordered, "Fire the main battery!" But nothing happened for long seconds, though the cruiser's 5-inchers had been trained out for minutes. "Hurry up," the captain fumed. "What's taking so long?" Immediately, a full nine-gun salvo was loosed. "Full speed ahead," Moore ordered.

After the second salvo, Moore decided that he was firing on friendly ships, so he ordered recognition signals lighted.

Quincy's officer of the deck felt that the ship was on a collision course with *Vincennes,* dead ahead, so he ordered course shifted slightly to starboard, a move that masked the forward guns.

Quincy was then struck in the stern aircraft hangar, and the volatile contents of the structure erupted in a furious blaze. The captain ordered the burning observation plane to be pushed over the side, but crewmen could not get close enough.

"Hard a-starboard," Moore ordered. The ship turned directly into the beam of a Japanese searchlight.

"Fire at the searchlight!"

Turret 1 traversed and fired, and the Japanese ship went dark.

Lighted better than she could have been by searchlights, *Quincy* caught numerous rounds from both Japanese columns. The next incoming salvo was 100 yards short, and the next was 75 yards over. Everyone on the bridge pulled in their heads; they knew a straddle when they saw one. Nearly all the starboard 5-inch gun crewmen were felled by the next salvo. Two torpedoes struck the port bow and breached the forward magazine, which blew up.

Moments after Turret 2 received a direct hit and exploded, Captain Moore encouraged his surviving gunners to "Give 'em hell," then was felled by a direct hit on the pilothouse, which took out most of the bridge watch.

The galley was ablaze, as were all the boats on the boat deck, the hangar area, the well deck, and the fantail. The ship was listing to port. A Japanese cruiser passed by at high speed, about 200 yards to port, and pumped salvo after salvo into the cripple. One of

Quincy's firerooms was opened to the sea by a torpedo, and communications to that point were lost, dooming the black gang, which was sealed off. A 5-inch gun was destroyed when another hit sparked its ready ammunition.

Captain Moore said with his dying breath, "Beach the ship." The bridge phone talker, a lieutenant commander, staggered out of the pilothouse and mumbled through a face that had been half shot away, "Everything will be okay. The ship will go down fighting."

Quincy's senior surviving officer made his way to the bridge, where, stunned by the carnage, he immediately ordered, "Abandon ship!" The survivors made it into the water by the slimmest of margins. At 2:35 AM, the heavy cruiser capsized to port, twisted furiously, and slid away beneath the waves—the first of numerous warships to inhabit the floor of what would soon be called Ironbottom Sound.

The leading Northern Force cruiser—the last the Japanese overtook—was *Vincennes,* and she had had more warning than her dying sisters. Captain Frederick Reifkohl was awakened after the deck watch first spotted flares and after men on deck felt two distinct underwater explosions and spotted flashes of gunfire away to the south. Reifkohl felt that *Chicago, Canberra, Australia,* and their escorts were firing on aircraft. He ordered speed increased to 15 knots.

U.S. Navy

Aviation Machinist's Mate 3rd Class William "Rusty" Campbell, a member of the port aft 20mm guncrew, distinctly saw illumination burst over *Astoria,* then saw Japanese shells strike the trailing cruiser from the waterline to the bridge. Fires flared and died.

A Japanese cruiser abaft the port beam illuminated *Vincennes* at 1:50, but Captain Reifkohl thought that the lights were those of Southern Force and sent an urgent radio appeal for the lights to be doused. Nevertheless, the gunnery officer ordered his guns trained out to port to track the nearest silhouette.

Rusty Campbell spoke rapidly into the sound-powered phone resting on his chest, asking permission to open with his aft 20mm gun to try to douse the lights. Permission to fire was denied because, a disembodied voice said in his ear, "They might be our friends out there."

The 8-inchers and most of the lighter weapons were tracking targets, but *Kako,* the third cruiser in the eastern Japanese column, got off the first rounds. A violent explosion engulfed *Vincennes* well forward on the port side. Rusty Campbell's sound-powered phone went dead.

Vincennes' 8-inchers returned fire at 1:53 over a distance of five miles. Their second salvo hit the last of the Japanese eastern cruisers, *Kinugasa,* but incoming struck Battle 2, the secondary command center, right over Campbell's head.

Campbell slipped out of his harness and crouched behind his gun's splinter shield. Another salvo hurtled him over the splinter shield and onto the deck, burying him under a pile of 20mm ammunition cans. A helping hand pulled the temporarily blinded gunner from beneath the cans.

The Japanese had succeeded in setting the American cruiser's aircraft hangar aflame, so they switched off their searchlights and fired at the burning target.

Campbell regained his sight as he was crawling inboard past the motor launches. A chief petty officer grabbed him and ordered him to run out some hose to try to fight the fire raging around the spotter plane on the port catapult, Campbell's primary work station. Campbell did as he was told, clamping the hose to the nearest hydrant on the boat deck and turning the valve. All he got was an ample shot of live steam.

The deck was growing hot beneath Campbell's feet, so he was only too glad to obey instructions to get down to the fantail; a storage locker only 10 feet beneath Campbell's gun was filled with bombs and depth charges, and Campbell wanted to be as far away as he could get from that blast when it occurred.

As Captain Reifkohl ordered a turn to port so he could close on the Japanese, a hit on the port side of the bridge cut down many of the men standing around him, but Reifkohl remained on his feet, untouched. All around, guns were being demolished and communications throughout the ship were disrupted as more of the Japanese cruisers found the range. *Vincennes*' main battery fire had to be maintained under local control.

Reifkohl next ordered a starboard turn to bring his ship out of the crossfire. Just then, however, several of *Chokai*'s torpedoes exploded on the port side by Fireroom 4.

It was 1:55, and *Vincennes* was doomed. One fireroom was off line, its crew smothered to a man. A torpedo from *Yubari,* in the western Japanese column, burst beside a starboard fireroom at 2:03, killing the entire complement.

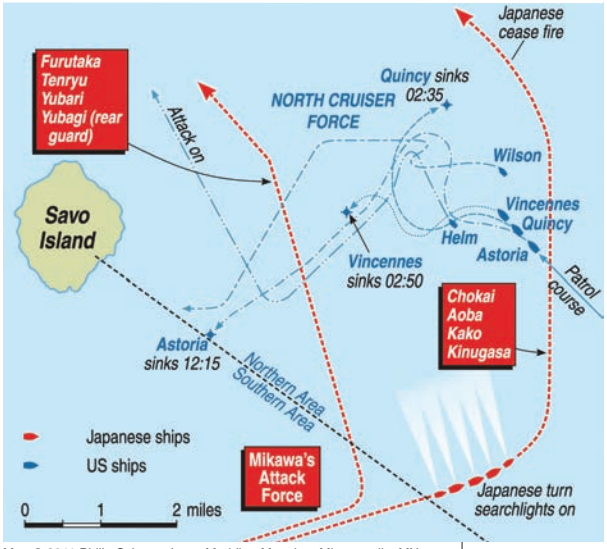
Emerging from the cover of the starboard aft 20mm gun, Rusty Campbell and the gunners around him peeked down at the well deck, where they saw the port 5-inch batteries and the bridge take repeated hits. There were fires everywhere. Campbell shouted down to a shipmate to learn what was going on, and the man shouted back that "Abandon ship" had been passed. In fact, though the cruiser was slowly losing way and listing heavily to port, Captain Reifkohl was only just beginning to think about ordering the crew into the water.

Campbell felt it was time to make a decision. He told the two gun crews, "We'd better get our asses out of here."

Twenty frightened sailors moved for the ladder at the same instant, jostling one another for position, dropping heavily to

U.S. Navy

ABOVE: Not without a fight: Before *Vincennes* sank three miles east of Savo Island, she inflicted casualties on the enemy. BELOW: Hostile waters: A diagram showing how the Japanese fleet attacked and scattered Turner's fleet.



Map © 2011 Philip Schwartzberg, Meridian Mapping, Minneapolis, MN

the deck below. They had to pass through the main superstructure aft, down three decks in all, to get to the fantail, from which they could enter the water. The ship's power was gone, so it was stone dark inside. Shells burst through the port bulkhead, sending everyone sprawling to the deck in a great heap. Campbell fell face up, another man's shoes in his face. He saw holes appear in both bulkheads as another shell went right through the compartment without detonating. There was a good deal of shouting. A third shell exploded when it hit the starboard bulkhead. The man on top of Campbell went limp while Rusty took a piece of shrapnel in the foot.

The roiling mass of men slowly sorted itself out and dribbled down the ladder to the next deck, where a secured manhole cover barred the way; it seemed to take ages before eager hands undogged the hatch. Campbell was the first man through, and he was terrorized. It was pitch dark, so he could not see if a hatch directly beneath his feet was open. If it was, Campbell could plunge 20 feet to a steel deck. If not, the drop was a few inches. He hung for long moments by his fingertips, until a pair of feet hit him in the head, and he plunged into the abyss. The fall was a four-incher. Campbell shouted to the men above that it was safe to come ahead.

A dilemma arose. Campbell's berthing space was directly beneath his feet. He pondered the merits of making a quick side trip to winkle out the $60 in cash he had hidden among his skivvies and the new $55 gabardine dress blues he had worn only twice. Suddenly, the connecting hatch opened and ammunition handlers from below boiled toward the adjacent fantail. Rusty followed them into the open, wondering at his stupidity. Campbell stepped onto the fantail and walked forward until stopped by thick flames and smoke. He turned back aft just as Japanese shells hit the bulkhead over his head. He ran. Another shell sent a piece of shrapnel into his left leg and hit the kapok life jacket covering his stomach so hard he doubled over. He smelled something burning, reached down to where he had been hit, and scorched his fingers on a white-hot piece of shrapnel embedded in the life jacket.

The firing abruptly stopped at 2:15 AM.

Only the destroyer *Ralph Talbot* stood between the Eighth Fleet and freedom, and her skipper ordered her in after the Japanese. *Furutaka, Tenryu,* and *Yubari,* the western Japanese column, fired a total of seven salvoes at the oncoming American destroyer, but she was hit only once, in the torpedo tubes. Then *Yubari* fired one last time, holing *Ralph Talbot*'s charthouse, knocking out part of the automatic gun-control system, and striking a 5-inch mount. The destroyer countered with an unsuccessful four-torpedo spread and ended the fight by entering a rain squall near Savo.

Ensign Paul "Tuny" Moffat, a destroyer squadron supply officer, was asleep in his stateroom aboard *Ellett,* a new destroyer and one of the fastest in the U.S. fleet, when he was awakened by the General Quarters klaxon. Moffat could hear the sound of gunfire from the west and could feel the ship storm away from its station off Tulagi. When Moffat came topside and headed for his battle station, the forward machine-gun battery, he could see flashes of gunfire to the west. By then, *Ellett* was steaming toward the battle at full speed.

By the time *Ellett* arrived off Savo, the Japanese were gone. Though mindful that his primary mission was getting at the transports, Admiral Mikawa elected to forgo his advantage because he expected the American carriers to mount search-and-strike missions before dawn. He need not have worried, for Fletcher's task force had already steamed out of range. The foray had been a clear victory, but the Japanese warships had seriously depleted their magazines, and Mikawa was convinced that he had tackled a far larger battle force than the Allies actually had in the vicinity. He chose discretion and left.

Ellett's captain, Lt. Cmdr. Francis Gardner, conned his ship directly to the aid of *Quincy* and *Vincennes,* which were aflame and in imminent danger of sinking. When Gardner heard cries for help from the water, he took an unprecedented and incredibly

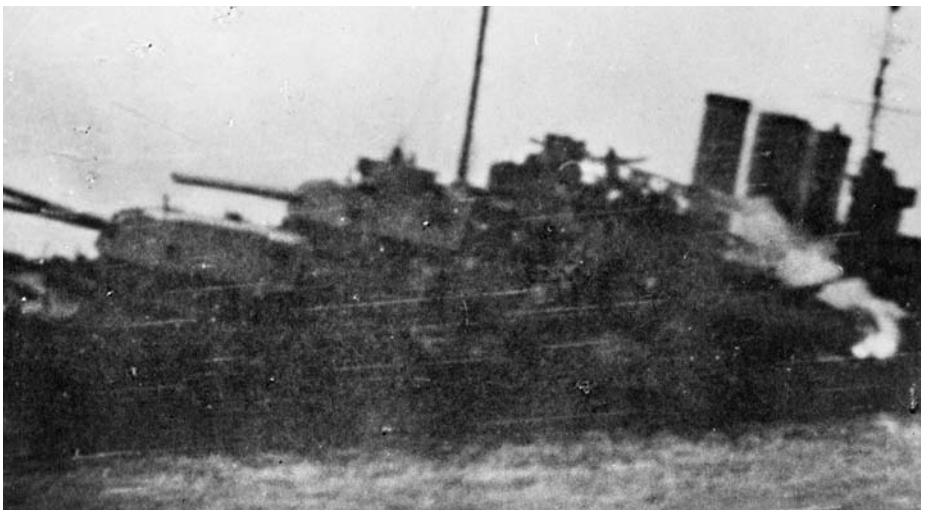
dangerous step. At his order, *Ellett* went dead in the water, fully illuminated by the burning cruisers. Rescue operations immediately commenced.

Ensign Tuny Moffat was the first man into the water, the one who tested rumors about schools of predatory sharks being loose in the channel. There were no sharks, but there were more castaways than Moffat could begin to help. He got a firm grip on one swimmer and helped him back to *Ellett,* at which point he was ordered to reboard because he was not secured to the ship with a lifeline, as were dozens of other destroyermen who had followed him into the inky water.

Vincennes was listing heavily to port, and there was a wide divergence of thought on the subject of abandoning ship. Some gunners had remained at their stations with secondary batteries, but crewmen were also drifting astern in life rafts. As Rusty Campbell stood by the rail—trying to make up his mind, watching seawater reach the port scuppers—he reached into his pocket, pulled out a cigarette, and lit up. He had taken only a few drags when a young officer snarled from by his elbow, "Sailor, put that cigarette out! Don't you know the smoking lamp is out?" The seaman stared at the officer in disbelief. *Vincennes* was aflame from stem to stern, and here was a character who was worried about a burning cigarette. Shock deepened when the officer repeated his order: "You heard what I said! Put that cigarette out!" Campbell flipped the butt into the water and glared back at the officer, convinced the man was about to ask for his name, rate, and service number.

U.S. Navy

ABOVE: Search and destroy: The Japanese cruiser *Yubari* uses its searchlights to seek out the Northern Fleet. BELOW: Cold light of day: Despite heroic efforts, *Canberra*'s crew could not save her; she was scuttled by friendly fire.



Australian War Memorial

Then it was time to go. Campbell took off his shoes and placed them neatly in line with 40 or 50 other pairs, then stepped off the deck into the water and swam about a hundred feet to the nearest raft. A strange sound behind Campbell brought him around. He floated on his back just in time to see *Vincennes* roll over, her four screws right on the surface. People were standing on her keel, between the screws. She hung there for a few minutes, then gently slid beneath the light swell.

Twenty-year-old Rusty Campbell, who had been at home aboard *Vincennes* since before the war, felt warm tears in his eyes as he pulled for a nearby raft and was helped out of the water.

Hundreds of refugees boarded *Ellett* and moved into every available space below decks to receive medical care or rest. A bluejacket whose lower jaw had been shot away died in Ensign Moffat's bunk. Moffat was sickened when the open deck behind his machine-gun battery was used to store the dead, who were neatly stacked—like cordwood—to conserve space.

Quincy and *Vincennes* went down during the night. *Canberra*'s crew fought to extinguish the flames that were ravaging the ship, but the Australian cruiser was too badly mauled for quick salvage. A message from Rear Admiral Kelly Turner clinched her fate; she was to be scuttled if she could not retire with the fleet at 6:30 AM. Her executive officer reluctantly ordered his crew to abandon ship, and hundreds of pajama-clad Aussies transferred to the destroyer *Patterson,* where spare clothing was broken out of the crew's lockers and unselfishly passed around. *Blue* moved to assist *Canberra*'s crew at 6 AM, and she and *Patterson* took off the last of 608 Australian officers and sailors shortly after 6:15.

Tuny Moffat watched from *Ellett* as a dark form loomed out of the semidarkness several thousand yards out. Was a Japanese cruiser returning to sink rescue vessels? Moffat watched and waited as the barrel of *Ellett*'s forward 5-inch gun depressed and tracked the target. Shell after shell was

Continued on page 96

The heavy weight of command is clearly visible on Eisenhower's face as he observes the Normandy invasion beaches on D+1 aboard the British mine layer *Apollo.* By this time he had already commanded three other major amphibious assaults—the invasions of North Africa, Sicily, and Salerno. INSET: The youthful West Point graduate, photographed in June 1915.

IKE: Supreme

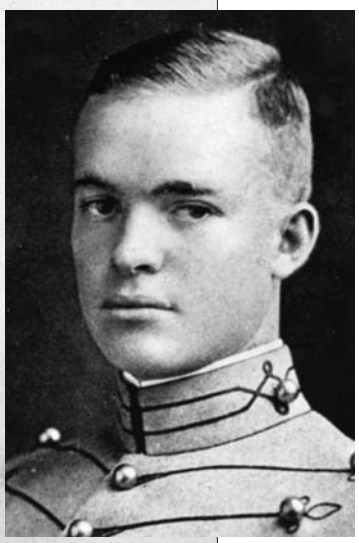
Both: National Archives

Allied Commander

BY ERIC HAMMEL

Dwight Eisenhower's military career and the key contacts he made along the way prepared him for his ultimate role in World War II.

DWIGHT DAVID EISENHOWER began life as David Dwight Eisenhower in Abilene, Kansas, on October 14, 1890, the third of five sons. It is known that his given names were rearranged because he was named David after his father and that his mother called him Dwight to avoid confusion. The rearrangement became permanent and, at some point, legal. His schoolmates called him "Ike," and that is the name that really stuck; no last name is ever needed when mention of him comes up, just plain Ike does the job.



Raised in humble circumstances within miles of the geographical and geodetic centers of the vast United States, Ike naturally focused his ambitions on a career in the Navy, sought an appointment to the United States Naval Academy as one in a long, long line of seekers after an excellent free college education. To help the two elder of his four brothers get started in college, as well as help feed the entire family, Ike put off his own dreams for a few years to simply earn money. Indeed, by the time he got around to seeking an appointment to Annapolis in 1910, he had slipped beyond the maximum age for a new cadet. He had to settle for his free education at the United States Military Academy at West Point. He was appointed a cadet in 1911 and began as a brand new one on June 14 of that year.

As in high school, Ike was a so-so student, apt to expend most of his energy in study he liked and very little in all else. Some of his professors considered him very bright, others less so. He excelled at football, however, in such an excessive manner that he would have been remembered solely for his game had history not fallen on his shoulders. He suffered an injury to his knee that ended his playing days and nearly cost him his free education. He learned and suffered conformity enough to keep his standing as a cadet, but he also evidenced a brilliant mind for the practical joke.

Cadet Eisenhower was awarded his commission in the infantry in June 1915, having graduated 61st of 164. His class, more than any other, would be touched by History, would be known in due course as the Class the Stars Fell On. Two of its members would be among only five U.S. Army officers ever to wear five stars.

Second Lieutenant Eisenhower's first posting was to the 19th Infantry Regiment as Fort Sam Houston, in the back lot of San Antonio, Texas. There, in addition to coaching the football team at a local military academy, Ike met and courted Mamie Doud. The couple became engaged on February 14, 1916, Valentine's Day, and they were married on July 1. Ike thought of taking up flying, but in the brief months between engagement and marriage his future in-laws had firmly laid down the law: If he took up flying, he must give up Mamie. Ike struggled with the choice. During the four-day period when this crisis came to a head, he opted for Mamie and thus found himself ready to buckle down and excel at his career as an infantry officer. He later wrote, "The decision was to perform every duty given me in the Army to the best of my ability and to do the best I could to make a creditable record, no matter what the nature of the duty." The test of this credo came soon enough.

In April 1917, as the nation girded for entry into World War I, Ike was temporarily drawn into training an Illinois National Guard regiment, then transferred to help form the new 57th Infantry Regiment. He was promoted permanent captain in May 1917. After only six months, Captain Eisenhower was dispatched to Georgia to train officer candidates in fieldcraft. And in two more months he washed up at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, to lead a company of officer candidates and oversee physical training for an entire training regiment. Mamie, who gave birth to a son, christened David Dwight, remained at Fort Sam Houston.

Naturally, Ike bombarded the Army with missives offering his life in return for combat duty in France. Why not; most of his West Point classmates were there or preparing to ship out. The Army responded in February 1918 with a transfer to Fort Meade, Maryland, to join an engineer regiment that was preparing a heavy tank battalion for duty in France. In March, Ike was told he would command the tank battalion at the front, but shortly he was ordered to lead everyone who was

National Archives

ABOVE: Second Lieutenant Eisenhower and his bride, Mamie Doud Eisenhower, in San Antonio, Texas, 1916, where he was assigned to the 19th Infantry Regiment at Fort Sam Houston. RIGHT: Wearing a white shirt and tie, Dwight Eisenhower (second from right) poses for a photo during a backyard football game in Abilene, Kansas (date unknown). OPPOSITE: Lt. Col. Eisenhower (in campaign hat) stands next to a Renault FT-17 light tank during maneuvers at Camp Colt, Pennsylvania, in 1918. His dour expression may be due to his being denied the chance to see combat in France.

not going to France to Camp Colt, near Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, in order to build a brand-new tank battalion from scratch. Ike was the only Regular Army officer assigned to the new base. At Camp Colt, the troops commanded by Ike were designated the nucleus of the new Army Tank Corps and assigned the mission of training all of the Army's replacement tank crewmen, who would graduate to the war. But even that went awry. Thanks to an arcane agreement with the British, the trained tank men were marooned at Camp Colt; none of them went to France, yet Ike's trainers kept churning out new ones. Made a temporary major in June 1918, Ike tried to put on a cheerful face and an enthusiastic demeanor. On the inside, nevertheless, he seethingly contemplated resigning his commission as soon as hostilities ended.

Things began to look up for Ike on his 28th birthday, October 14, 1918, when he received advance news that he was to be promoted lieutenant colonel and, even better, received orders to France with his trained tank crews. Departure was set for November 18. He next turned down an offer of promotion to colonel if he agreed to remain at Camp Colt, but the whole uptick in fortunes was shot through the heart on November 11, when the Armistice was signed in France.

Ike remained a lieutenant colonel until the summer of 1920, when he was reduced back to his substantive rank, captain. But he was promoted permanent major in December with a June 1920 date of rank. Many a wartime lieutenant colonel—the 10-years-older George Marshall among them—received identical treatment (lieutenant colonel to captain to major), so Ike knew that he was going to be a major for a very long time. As things turned out, it was to be 16 years.

Ike remained in the Tank Corps following the Armistice and served at several bases until the corps was consolidated at Fort Meade under the new Infantry Tank School. Here he met and fell into the orbit of Colonel (but soon enough Major) George Patton,

Library of Congress

a cavalryman who had served colorfully at the head of a tank brigade in World War I. The two became fast friends and partners in applying lessons learned to the nascent American tank doctrine. Patton was five years older than Ike and had graduated from West Point six years ahead of Ike, but the two became inseparable friends and partners. Patton's worldview led him to posit independent divisions formed upon a backbone of fast, well-armed tanks, while Ike's led him to lobby for inclusion of tank units in the standard infantry division. Neither agenda progressed all that far while they served at Fort Meade, but they and the American armies in Europe wielded exactly such weapons 20 years hence.

It was the friendship with Patton that led Ike to his first brush with greatness. Neighbors as well as colleagues and friends, the two socialized regularly. One day in 1919, Patton invited Ike to his home to meet Brig. Gen. Fox Conner, a renowned military genius who had served as chief of operations at Pershing's American Expeditionary Force (AEF) headquarters in France (where, incidentally, Conner had mentored his subordinate, Colonel George Marshall). When he met Ike, Conner was Pershing's chief of staff at AEF headquarters in Washington.

The Art Archive

Conner, who was known for his ability and keen desire to be exposed to new ideas, had a splendid and useful evening with the odd couple of Patton and Eisenhower, and he marked the younger down as a man to see to. Conner ended 1921 in command of an infantry brigade in the Panama Canal Zone, and he invited newly demoted Major Eisenhower to serve as his executive officer. The invitation was a godsend; a few days after Christmas 1920, three-year-old David Dwight was dead from scarlet fever and the distraught Eisenhowers needed to start over somewhere else.

Conner's brigade had been stripped of one of its two infantry regiments and, for all its strategic importance, the Canal Zone was something of a military backwater. Ike's official duties were light, giving him plenty of reason to leap at every opportunity to keep his mind active. It was in this atmosphere that Fox Conner, one of the great military minds of his era, began his three-year effort to inscribe all he knew and all he believed on the mind of a man he felt might be one of the next generation's great military leaders. Conner assigned books for Ike to read—a roiling broth of history, poetry, fiction, military doctrine, and philosophy—then Ike sat with his mentor to discuss every aspect of the current volume from every angle either could think of. The two also relived every major military campaign in history by means of maps and text and milked every imaginable lesson for modern warfare from each of them. Conner, in his role as military oracle, repeatedly impressed upon Ike that the next war was going to bring the United States into a coalition, no doubt with Britain, and that coalition warfare was the most difficult to manage. Engraved on Ike's soul—and thus on history—were Conner's three interlinked maxims: Never fight unless you have to, never fight alone, and never fight for long.

Conner thus readied Ike for the job Ike, above all other Americans of his generation, would be best equipped to master and lead. Ike later wrote of his three-year sojourn as Conner's single acolyte: "[Life with Conner] was a sort of graduate school in military affairs and the humanities, leavened by comments and discourses of a man who was experienced in his knowledge of men and their conduct."

While living in the Canal Zone, and thanks in large measure to subtle conditioning of Mamie by Mrs. Conner, the Eisenhowers managed to clear the air between themselves over David's death and get on with raising John, who was born in the summer of 1922.

The Infantry Tank School reclaimed Ike in September 1924—to coach the base football team—but Ike went straight to work to earn a student billet at The Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia. This fair fruit was denied the football coach, but Fox Conner, from his new position as deputy chief of staff of the Army, pulled a series of strings in the background that yielded, in August 1925, a coveted place for Ike as student at the Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The pace at Leavenworth was much more grueling that the pace on post under Fox Conner, but for Ike it was mostly a repeat course. He studied hard and graduated at the top of his class, a really important career milestone, especially for a man who had missed his generation's big war. Moreover, the friendships

Ike forged or renewed at Leavenworth would be invaluable in the future. More to the point, the Leavenworth experience and its laudatory outcome finally ignited in Ike a fierce fire that caused him to aspire to greatness. Even Ike admitted to its being a "watershed in my life."

From Kansas, the Eisenhowers were ordered to Fort Benning, where Ike, who had been reassigned to the infantry branch, was to serve as executive officer—and football coach—for The Infantry School's crack demonstration infantry regiment. When Fox Conner learned of this, he once again used his high office in Ike's behalf and had the 37-year-old major reassigned to duty in Washington, D.C., at the Battle Monuments Commission, which was headed by retired General of the Armies John J. Pershing. When Ike wrote (with help from his youngest brother, Milton, a former journalist, now an assistant secretary of agriculture) a guidebook for the effort, Pershing judged it excellent and wrote a commendatory letter for the major's personnel file.

Ike next requested assignment as a student at the Army War College, which offered advanced military education at a much more leisurely pace than Leavenworth. Here, again, Ike came in daily contact, at work and play, with the best soldiers of his generation.

Upon graduation from the War College in June 1928, Ike accepted an offer to return to the Battle Monuments Commission on the promise that he would be able to spend a year in France. This seeming junket proved to be a valuable investment by the American nation. As Ike traversed most of France in a chauffeur-driven car, the military part of his mind idly fought mock campaigns on the passing vistas, memorizing terrain as it did. Who could know the benefits derived from Ike's memories of these days and weeks on the road?

The one-year sojourn in France led to a return to Washington, where in November 1929, Major Eisenhower became one of two assistant executive officers assigned to the assistant secretary of war. The enterprise Ike had joined was the primary node of an effort to catalogue the whole of American industry against a time in which it might be mobilized to support an all-out war effort. The task had come about as a result of the monumentally lousy job industry and the military had done in modulating needs and effort for World War I. Ike and his fellow assistant, an engineer major, did the heavy lifting, and once again a future United States benefited immensely from the effort. Major Eisenhower lived for a time at the exact nexus between the military and the industrial behemoth that would supply, equip, and feed it in time of war—if all went well and the new economic depression didn't obliterate one or both sides of the crucial equation.

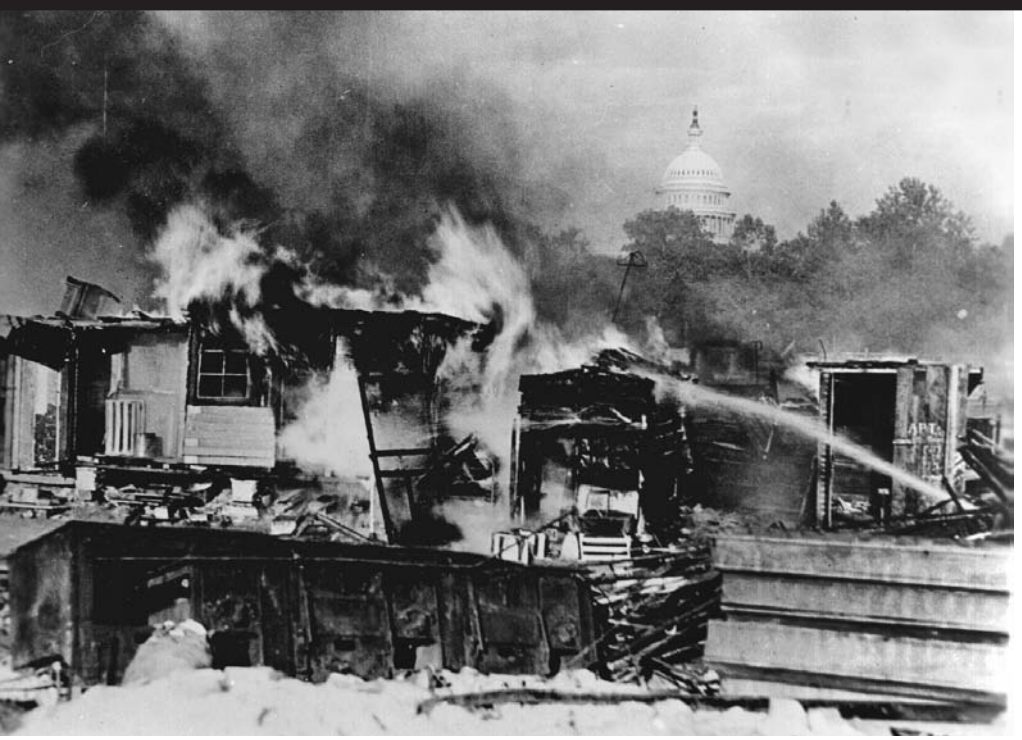
Ike's tenure at the office of the assistant secretary of war coincided with important planning events. The Army's duty to maintain readiness for war had been enshrined in the National Defense Act of 1920, a document whose genesis had been overseen by Fox Conner under Pershing's command. The army's own document covering that ground was the Protective Mobilization Plan. But this plan covered only the Army, not the American industrial base that was needed to bring the plan to fruition on battlefields. The Army required such a plan—an industrial mobilization plan. The office of the assistant secretary had jurisdiction, and Ike and his fellow assistant executive officer were tasked with writing at least an outline. The immediate result came in the form of long journeys to confer upon a parochially educated Army officer all he needed to know about the inner workings of his nation's industrial base. By undertaking the educational requirements of the task, Ike came face to face with what was possible—and not possible—for industry to do for an army. This was a private education fit for a future commander in chief of a war effort born in its largest degree upon the potentials of industry and how they might be directed in such a way as to literally overwhelm an enemy state. To start with, Ike studied all that had gone wrong with the lamented 1915–1920 industrial mobilization, and he did so with aid of many of the lions of American industry, such as Bernard Baruch, and the heads of American Telephone and Telegraph, the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, and other corporate giants. Along the way, he received an education in constitutional restraints on how the government might deal with private wealth and power in a future national emergency. It was, all told, one hell of an eye-opening experience for an obscure mid-ranked officer from the dusty Kansas prairie.

Library of Congress

The brilliant Major General Fox Conner, Ike's mentor and everlasting influence.

By the time the industrial mobilization plan had been drafted, General Douglas MacArthur had become Army chief of staff (having stepped up to it over Fox Conner's head in 1930). The heart of the plan, once outlined to the requisite government authorities, brought Ike to MacArthur's attention and slowly into his orbit. When Ike's immediate boss moved over from the office of the assistant secretary to become deputy chief of staff (and thus overseer of the Army's budget), Ike remained formally assigned as assistant to the new executive but was increasingly called on to serve as an informal aide-de-camp to MacArthur. He was thus at MacArthur's side during one of the sorriest episodes in U.S. Army history, the July 1928 military riot that dispersed down-and-out World War I veterans who had rallied to Washington, D.C., to seek a government bonus for their war service. The so-called Bonus March looked like a nascent Bolshevik revolution to conservative Army officers, Ike among them. MacArthur simply went hog wild when he was deputized by President Herbert Hoover to disperse these luckless former comrades seeking redress from their nation, which once upon a time had declared itself grateful for their sacrifices in war.

Library of Congress



Bettmann/Corbis

ABOVE: Shacks constructed on the Anacostia Flats by the so-called "Bonus Army" in Washington, D.C., ablaze after an ugly confrontation with the U.S. Army, summer 1932. RIGHT: Army Chief of Staff General Douglas MacArthur and his aide, Major Eisenhower, during the "Bonus Army" conflict.

Though highly disciplined (it was supervised by a retired general), the so-called Bonus Expeditionary Force refused to vacate several government sites in the capital district after a bill seeking the bonus was voted down in both houses of Congress. This refusal to disperse triggered an order from President Hoover for General MacArthur to quell what Hoover characterized as a riot. The bonus marchers were in illegal possession of government land, mainly owned by the Department of the Treasury, but they were peaceful, even passive.

With a squeamish and unhappy Ike at his side, a beautifully uniformed MacArthur unleashed infantry and mounted cavalry (the latter commanded by George Patton) to clear the marchers from the occupied grounds. In the heat of "battle" the chief of staff apparently—allegedly—ordered some of his troops to destroy the squalid bonus encampments near Anacostia by fire in retaliation for allegedly hurled bricks and other debris. Ike hated and even feared the revolutionary potential of the Bonus March, but he nonetheless hated to see the ragged former soldiers burned out.

That November, Franklin Delano Roosevelt was elected president by an overwhelming margin, and he and his New Deal blew into Washington in March 1933. By then, Ike had been formally assigned as MacArthur's aide-de-camp and, wonder of wonders, MacArthur was retained by the new president. In short order, Ike was pulled into preparing the Army for overseeing the start-up of the new Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), an effort to put tens and hundreds of thousands of jobless youths to work cleaning lakes and streams, planting what would come to be billions of trees, and generally sprucing up federal parks and preserves. The Army, tasked with organizing, leading, and victualing the CCC, benefited immensely from an exercise almost identical to a military mobilization and shooting-free military expedition. Nearly at the center of the effort was Ike, who like Marshall (and Hap Arnold), gained immensely important insights into executive oversight of the art and science of manpower mobilization and maintaining a massive and far-flung military campaign in the field.

As to the rest of the New Deal, it drove professional soldiers crazy. Ike was not immune to detesting it even though, in the end, it brought the nation most of the way out of the Great Depression and set the stage for the unbeatable industrial mobilization of 1938–1945 that undergirded Ike's own rise to undreamable heights.

MacArthur's term as chief of staff ended in 1935. Though MacArthur formally retired from the U.S. Army, he was hired by the president-elect of the soon-to-be-independent Philippines, Manuel Quezon, to oversee the creation of a Philippine defense force. As such, MacArthur remained in some shadowy active-duty status and was allowed to take several active-duty field-grade officers with him. His first choice was Ike, who was a bit torn by the offer. His chief imperative at that stage of his career was to command troops, something he had done very little of in the 20 years since he left West Point. But there was no way he could turn his back on the important, even historical, work—not to mention the adventure—MacArthur's offer was bound to lead to. Besides, here was an opportunity to put much of his theoretical army-building experience to practical use.

Ike arrived in Manila—bachelor for a year—in September 1935. The task at hand was to build a conscript army from

meager financial allotments and obsolete weapons sufficient in size and power to defend a Philippines state once the United States granted independence and withdrew the bulk of its own military force. A plan drawn up at the Army War College set a $25 million budget for the task, including pay, and that nearly caused Manuel Quezon, presumptive president of the impoverished nation-to-be, a heart attack. Frankly, the breadth of the task at hand in no way corresponded to any possibility of success without massive financial backing from the United States, which was very far along in robbing its own military of any possibility of defending the nation.

The effort expended by MacArthur, Ike (who was promoted lieutenant colonel in July 1936), and another aide sputtered along in a sort of hopeless vacuum. MacArthur's grandiose plans were just plain unattainable and, to Ike's mind, often quite absurd. As time went on, Ike came to detest MacArthur, whom he had never considered quite sane (though he did detect a sort of brilliance). The two nearly came to blows in late 1939 when MacArthur implied to Quezon that Ike had lied about something, when in fact the liar was MacArthur. That cut it; Ike was irreconcilably angry on top of being frustrated by what he perceived as having wasted years on an impossible mission. He requested an immediate return to the United States, which he would have had within a matter of months anyway. He sailed for home with his family in December 1939, by which time the world had been made topsy-turvy from the new war in Europe. He never suffered MacArthur's company again.

Lieutenant Colonel Eisenhower arrived in San Francisco with orders to report for duty with the 15th Infantry Regiment, a part of the 3rd Division based at Fort Lewis, Washington. While making a courtesy call on the commanding general of the Fourth Army, which was headquartered at the Presidio of San Francisco, Ike was instantly co-opted to work with the Fourth Army staff on urgent plans to accommodate a proposed call up of the National Guard in the region from Minnesota to the entire West Coast.

During the course of the planning exercise, Ike drove a hundred miles to watch the 15th Infantry take part in an amphibious exercise in Monterey Bay. While strolling along the landing beach, Ike came upon the Fourth Army commander, who was accompanied by Army Chief of Staff George Marshall. This was the second time Ike and Marshall had met. The first was in Washington, when Colonel Marshall had dropped by the Battle Monuments Commission offices to invite Major Eisenhower to join his staff at The Infantry School, an idea shot down by the chief of infantry. Upon a hurried introduction by the Fourth Army commander, Marshall quipped a knowing reference to Ike's long service with MacArthur, whom Marshall also loathed: "Have you learned to tie your own shoes again since coming back, Eisenhower?" "Yes, sir," Ike replied affably, "I am capable of that chore, anyhow."

National Archives

Colonel Eisenhower, shown in 1940 while serving with the 15th Infantry Regiment, shortly before his assignment to the War Plans Division.

Ike finally reported in to the 15th Infantry in February 1940 at its temporary base at Fort Ord, California, just up the road from Monterey. He was assigned as regimental executive officer, but his request to command a paper infantry brigade was also granted when the 15th returned to Fort Lewis. The Army, under Marshall, was preparing for massive expansion, and it was already prospectively manning up skeletal cadres for future units and commands. By this stage of his career, the formerly obscure Ike was seen as something of a comer—had been since his sponsorship by Fox Conner, a distinction not lost on the sagacious Marshall.

Not beyond Ike's ken, there was something like a bidding war going on for his services by corps and Army commanders everywhere in the United States, but the chief of infantry balked at each request; he wanted Ike to spend some time with the troops. Ike found himself in his element as the 15th Infantry spent most of the spring and summer of 1940 engaged in grueling exercises in the field, including a 1,100-mile vehicular road march planned mainly by Ike, who was never happier than when he exhausted himself in the field, with the troops.

In October, Ike received a letter from Patton, who wrote that he was to be given command of one of the new armored divisions. Would Ike like to command an armored regiment? Hell, yes!

But it was not to be. Another close friend opened a bid on Ike. Brig. Gen. Leonard "Gee" Gerow had been especially close to Ike since Lieutenant Eisenhower had reported in to the 19th Infantry at Fort Sam Houston in 1915. Four years Ike's senior in grade but Ike's age, Gerow was probably Ike's best friend in the Army. The two had also attended the Command and General Staff School together. There, Gerow had been Ike's study mate and closest competitor; he had come in number two behind Ike by two-thirds of a grade point. They had also been neighbors in Washington during overlapping tours. Now, in mid-November 1940, as Ike dreamed of commanding a tank regiment under his dashing pal, Patton, Gerow asked Ike to serve under him at the Army War Plans Division (WPD).

This was a moment of truth, a historical pivot point, actually. Accepting Patton's offer, once he was released by unseen hands, stood a good chance of taking Ike to the summit of battlefield glory, for the unrestrainable Patton would certainly command men in battle. But Gerow's offer was a path, not so much to glory, but to relevance, even if not

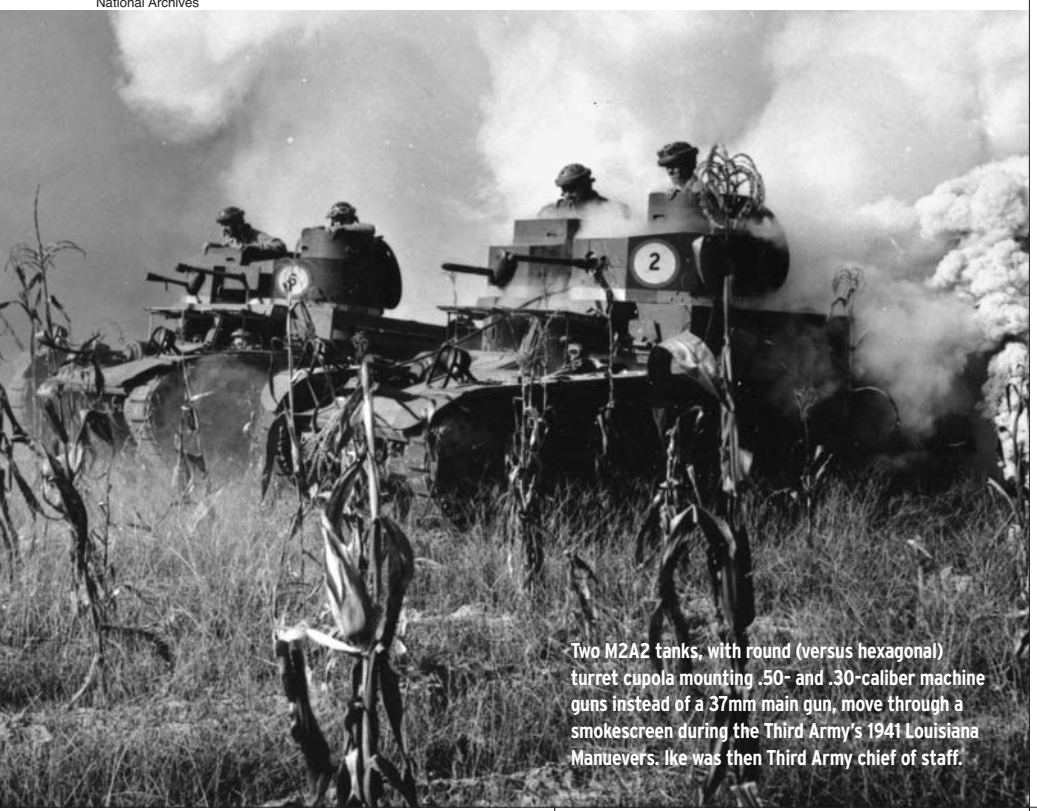
to a paragraph in history books. Ike at 50 knew where the touchpoints and waystations of his career trajectory had been taking him after his tutoring by Fox Conner. If he cared about his Army and his nation as much as he hoped he cared, there was really only one offer he could take, and that was Gerow's. But he hemmed and hawed in his long, written response to Gerow, leaving the decision to his friend.

The Army had other ideas. Before Gerow could act, the Army bureaucracy reassigned Ike to the General Staff Corps and then as chief of staff of the 3d Division, the 15th Infantry's parent unit. He labored with the division until March 1941, when he received a temporary promotion to colonel and a posting as chief of staff for IX Corps, also headquartered at Fort Lewis. Among Ike's varied and urgent duties with IX Corps was accommodation for several National Guard divisions and independent units based in the IX Corps area as well as upgrading facilities to house and train tens of thousands of conscripts called to duty under the Selective Service and Training Act of 1940.

In mid-June 1941, the Third Army commanding general wrote to Marshall to request a new chief of staff, and he named Ike as his first choice. Marshall immediately acceded and stamped the transfer request "urgent." Ike reported to Third Army headquarters, in San Antonio, on July 1, and was assigned as deputy chief of staff. A month later he was named chief. This was all just in time to oversee the Army staff during the largest maneuvers ever held in the United States, mostly in Louisiana. Third Army (designated Red Army) won the mock war and Ike was given a huge amount of the credit. On September 29, 1941, Ike was promoted temporary brigadier general.

Third Army was still basking in its deserved glory, working hard to prepare for further expansion and field exercises, when the roof fell in on Pearl Harbor and the Philippines. On December 12, the day after Germany and Italy declared war, Ike received a phone call from Colonel Walter Bedell Smith, Marshall's military secretary: "The chief says for you to hop a plane and get up here right away. Tell your boss that formal orders will come through later." This, as it turned out, was The Call most senior military professionals only hope they'll receive when their nation is at war.

National Archives



Two M2A2 tanks, with round (versus hexagonal) turret cupola mounting .50- and .30-caliber machine guns instead of a 37mm main gun, move through a smokescreen during the Third Army's 1941 Louisiana Manuevers. Ike was then Third Army chief of staff.

Ike was on his way to catch a train to Washington within an hour of Beetle Smith's phone call. In Washington early on the second Sunday of the war, he dropped his bag at brother Milton's apartment and reported in to Gee Gerow, who was still running WPD. Gerow gave Ike a desk but there was no work yet. That depended on his meeting with Marshall.

The chief of staff summoned Ike to his office. It was the fifth time the two had laid eyes on one another, and the first time they ever exchanged more than two or three polite sentences. But they knew one another because they had shared the attention of Fox Conner, who had drilled into Ike's head during the Panama sojourn that Marshall was a military genius. Conner had also commended Ike to Marshall. And that was good enough for both Conner devotees.

The first order of business was bringing Ike up to date on the situation in the Pacific. Marshall gave a concise briefing, perhaps 20 minutes in length. The long and the short of it was that the Americans, British, and Dutch didn't stand a chance of retaining their holdings west of the 180th meridian. Above all, the Philippines would have to be sacrificed in due course.

At the conclusion of his depressing brief, Marshall asked Ike, simply, "What should be our general line of action?"

This question was all Marshall. Ike realized he was being tested by the great man. Rather than blurt out an answer, he replied "Give me a few hours."

Back at his desk, Ike ran everything he knew about the situation through his head. He was 51 years old then, had spent 30 years as cadet and soldier. He had as good a military education as any other new brigadier general—better, in fact, than most. Everything he was and everything he knew pointed to just one possible answer.

Comprehending that, per prewar analysis and policy—per War Plan Rainbow No. 5, which he might not even know about yet—it was plain to see that the Philippines could not be effectively resupplied or meaningfully reinforced ahead of defeat and surrender. If the Allied nations

Both: National Archives

ABOVE: Eisenhower, now a four-star general, confers with Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall during President Roosevelt's meetings with Churchill in North Africa, June 1943. BELOW: A War Plans Board meeting, May 1942. Shown are (left to right) Colonel St. C. Street, Ike, Cololnel A.S. Nevins, Brig. Gen. R.C. Crawford, Colonel C.A. Russell, and Colonel H. A. Barber, Jr.

were ever to achieve a turnaround in the Pacific, it was an absolute necessity that Australia be preserved as a base from which the Allies could start back up the long road to victory. This is the answer he took back to Marshall—an answer accepted so quickly as to make it plain to Ike that he had confirmed Marshall's own conclusion. This agreement fused a personal bond that never broke.

Ike became immersed and consumed in the preservation of Australia. He took the lead in planning. Every detail concerning Australia passed across his desk, often requiring his consideration and approval. So much of it tied into matters of supply that he met daily with Brig. Gen. Brehon Somervell, the War Department's resident supply and procurement chief. Few people got on well with Somervell, but Ike certainly did, probably due to his intimate appreciation of Somervell's job, stemming from his days in the assistant secretary of the war's office. Ike's relationship with the prickly Somervell turned out to be another critical alliance.

In a series of steps and at some great risk, the winter of 1941-1942 was consumed by the early but critical stage of turning Australia into MacArthur's primary base in the western South Pacific. (MacArthur had been reactivated at three-star rank in mid 1941, appointed Far East commander, promoted to four-star rank as the Philippines defenses collapsed around him, and finally dispatched to Australia by presidential order.) There were other side efforts to build a last-ditch line of defense across much smaller islands in the western South Pacific—in other words, competition for critical supplies and a very small pool of adequately trained troops. Indeed, mostly half-trained units were dispatched in the hope, but by no means the certainty, that they could complete their training ahead of battle.

Though at this time Ike had little contact with planners assigned to the many conundrums attending America's entry into the war in Europe, it turned out that transforming Australia into an offensive base was pretty much the same as transforming the British Isles into an offensive base. Ike missed out on meeting Sir Winston Churchill and a high-level British military delegation when they descended on the War Department in December for ARCADIA, but he was briefed and some of his opinions were sought. The British delegation left behind high-ranking officers to liase with the American chiefs of staff. The British Army representative was General Sir John Dill, who had recently been routinely superceded as chief of the Imperial General Staff. Dill was given open access to Marshall and WPD.

Ike succeeded Gerow as WPD chief on February 14, 1942. At that moment, plans were being wrought to transform the uniformed side of the War Department into a more efficient war footing. WPD was somewhat rejiggered and on March 9 redesignated Oper-

ations Division (OPD) of the War Department. Its mission was to serve as Marshall's nerve center, his command post, his think tank for running the war. Under previous plans, before the United States became involved in the global war, it had been thought that the chief of staff would take to the field at the head of the fighting Army, leaving lower ranked deputies to run the Washington operation. The reality, post-Pearl Harbor, was that it would be all as formidable a leader and executive as Marshall could do to control the American war effort with his immense and growing staff in Washington. So, on March 9, 1942, Ike became the Army's first OPD chief, with a jump in (temporary) grade to major general. That same day, some earlier informal reconfigurations became formalized. In one such move, the Army itself was divided into three major components: the Army Air Forces (AAF) under Lt. Gen. Hap Arnold, the Army Ground Forces (AGF) under Lt. Gen. Lesley McNair, and the Army Service Forces (ASF) under Lt. Gen.Brehon Somervell.

Effectively the overseer of every detail of the U.S. Army's war effort, Ike was quickly brought up to speed and given a hand in literally everything. A lot of it seemed like background noise intended to drown Ike in minutia. His personal permission for Fourth Army to issue three thousand rifles to the Alaska Territorial Guard was a good example of a necessary but distracting intrusion on his time and thought processes.

National Archives

Ike with his Operation Overlord logistics expert, Lt. Gen. Brehon Somervell, head of the Army Service Forces and builder of the Pentagon.

Ike realized on March 10 that his superiors throughout the U.S. military were coming around to the idea—an idea he had been pushing—of an invasion of France from yet-to-be-built bases in Britain. But his flush of achievement died swiftly when news reached him at his desk that his father had died earlier in the day. Unable to get away to Kansas, Ike used hard work to displace his grief, but he was finally overwhelmed by his emotions. He quit work at 7:30 that evening. Later in the month, after thinking profoundly about the father-son relationship, he forced himself to take a weekend off with Mamie to visit John at West Point, which the young Eisenhower had entered the previous June.

As soon as Ike returned to his desk at the War Department, the whole world seemed to realign itself around him.

Marshall visited England in early April to brief British commanders on current American planning, show interest, and collect facts and impressions. Shortly after his return to Washington on April 17, the chief of staff called Ike in to lament about how little time he had been able to spend looking over the nascent American field and service commands there. Perhaps Ike would make an inspection tour of those commands; no doubt a major general would be less encumbered by the ceremonial sideshows a four-star general and Army chief of staff inevitably endured when visiting foreign nations. Ike asked only to be allowed to take with him Marshall's own chief of staff, Maj. Gen. Mark Clark, a 1917 West Point graduate whose insights both Ike and Marshall had come to value over many years of shared service.

It took until May 23 for Ike and Clark to set out. Hap Arnold joined them for the ride, as did the chief of naval aviation and a senior RAF staff officer based in Washington. They flew via the northern ferry route, from Maine to Newfoundland to Labrador to Greenland, to Iceland, to Scotland, and on down to England.

Tops on Ike's list of visits was the one with Army Air Forces Maj. Gen. James Chaney, at the headquarters of U.S. Army Forces in the British Isles (USAFBI). Here, Ike sensed that Chaney and his staff were operating under some sort of malaise. They certainly did not seem charged up by their work. Ike noted disapprovingly that they all dressed in civilian clothes on weekends, a sure sign they were not a hundred percent into the effort workaholic Ike expected of all American soldiers in time of war. He also noted that the USAFBI staff had not been dealt a fair hand by higher headquarters. Clearly it had not been kept in the planning or information loops to the degree USAFBI required to effectively facilitate the rapid-fire changes taking place in the British Isles, not to mention a sufficient familiarity with events worldwide that might impinge on events in northwestern Europe.

The inspection tour was comprehensive, a serious effort by two extremely serious men to get a grip on events, organizations, and personalities. Among the many British officers Ike met for the first time was Lt. Gen. Bernard Law Montgomery, who briefed the Americans on a large training exercise he was overseeing. Another notable British officer Ike met with was Vice Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, cousin to King George VI and commander of Britain's special operations—commando—forces.

Ike personally reported his findings to Marshall on June 3. His bottom-line recommendation with respect to USAFBI was that Chaney be replaced without prejudice by a current War Department insider who had a complete, up-to-date picture of the war effort. Marshall asked if Ike had an individual in mind. Of course he did. His first choice would be Maj. Gen. Joseph McNarney, an airman serving as Marshall's own deputy chief of staff. (McNarney happened to be Ike's West Point classmate.) Ike's reasoning was sound; it would be a long time before there were significant Army ground forces deployed to the British Isles, and much longer still before they were sent to battle. In the interim, the war would

be taken to German-occupied Europe and Germany itself by American airmen. Marshall demurred; his own deputy chief was too essential to be spared, and he also felt strongly that he required an airman as his deputy. Ike asked to be given time to think about another recommendation. Unbidden, Ike recommended that Clark be returned to England as commanding general of the II Corps headquarters, which was about to be formally shifted to England to take part the invasion.

Ike had also devoted much time in England to assessing BOLERO, the operation to supply the proposed invasion with all the men and stuff it would take to cross into France and ultimately drive into Germany. Things had not been going well for some time; everything that could be put into the pipeline at the North American end was moving into place in the British Isles far too slowly, if at all. There were profound problems at both ends of the pipeline, and along the way. On June 6, Ike recommended that a lieutenant general charged with unsnarling BOLERO be dispatched to England as soon as possible.

Beginning with a blank piece of paper, Ike also had gone to work after his return from Britain on a comprehensive framework for a U.S. Army command structure to oversee the eventual air war to be run out of England and the general build-up of all American forces—air, ground, perhaps even naval—in the British Isles. On June 8, 1942, Ike presented Marshall with a paper entitled "Directive for the Commanding General, European Theater of Operations." This posited a joint command, with a single commander in chief, for all American forces deployed to Europe.

When Ike presented his paper to Marshall, he admonished the chief of staff to give it his full attention as soon as possible. Marshall replied, "I certainly do want to read it. You may be the man who executes it. If that's the case, when can you leave?"

On June 11, Marshall told Ike he would indeed be "the man who executes it." Also, per Ike's recommendation, Marshall assented to Mark Clark being sent back to England as commanding general of the II Corps.

Only then did Ike begin to consider that every task he had undertaken in Washington, since being summoned to WPD, had been monitored by Marshall as a proof toward this singular order to command, this singular demonstration of trust. The Army had long supposed that the chief of staff would command the armies in the field. Real-world exigencies had led to the appointment of one man to stand in the chief's place, and that one man—if he proved to be up to the job—was Dwight David Eisenhower of Abilene, Kansas, and no other. Marshall conferred a third star on Ike. Though he remained a substantive lieutenant colonel, Ike had thus been elevated over the heads of more than 300 more senior major generals.

Ike's first act as ETOUSA commander in chief was to appoint Mark Clark as his deputy. (Clark continued to command the II Corps, which had no troops to oversee.) Marshall promoted the hard-nosed Beetle Smith to brigadier general and appointed him Ike's chief of staff. Smith would control access to Ike as he had to Marshall, and not so much of it as to distract the theater commander from the heart and soul of his mission.

Ike also met with many Washington luminaries whose various blessings he needed or would need. Not for the first time, he paid a courtesy call on President Roosevelt, who happened once again to be hosting Prime Minister Churchill. Secretary of War Stimson, a hell-for-leather type, urged Ike to launch the invasion of France at the earliest opportunity.

A stop at the Chief of Naval Operations offices yielded an important discussion with Admiral Ernest King pertaining to Army-Navy cooperation in the ETO. Long, long tradition guided the relationship between the U.S. Army and U.S. Navy from the perspective of "paramount interest"—who really owned the operation anyway? At very little urging, and in spite of an intense Atlantic-wide antisubmarine campaign then underway, King allowed as the invasion of northwestern Europe—an objective to which all American and British effort aspired—was the Army's prime responsibility no matter how much the Navy bolstered it. Capping the discussion, the typically prickly King invited Ike to communicate directly with him as and when he found the need.

Lieutenant General Eisenhower returned to England on June 24. For the moment his brief as ETOUSA commander in chief registered only upon the thin roster of U.S. Army units and personnel in Europe. Ike was under particular orders from Marshall to integrate under direct Eighth Air Force control all AAF personnel then in the British Isles, including a panel of special observers assigned to the RAF. Marshall had also ordered Ike to direct the Eighth Air Force, in broad terms, to aim at attaining total air supremacy over northern Europe before the expected invasion of France was launched across the English Channel. This last was a mission that never went away until Germany lay in ruins and utterly defeated. Ike formally assumed his new command on June 25, 1942.

Almost unnoticed and uncommented on during the period of the changeover, Maj. Gen. James Chaney returned to the United States on June 20 to resume command of First Air Force, which he had himself established in December 1940. Chaney never recovered from his fight with Arnold over the USAFBI air command structure. At war's end, Chaney, still a major general, was the island commander at Iwo Jima.

Ike went straight to work as soon as he could settle with his staff into their headquarters, a large apartment building near Grosvenor Square that had been commandeered entirely for ETOUSA's use. Ike disliked being in the center of town but acknowledged that a scarcity of transportation and the need to attend meetings in many nearby buildings made it impossible to relocate to the country. He nevertheless planned to move to the country as soon as vehicles and prefabricated buildings could be shipped from the States and a suitable site could be found.

An early courtesy call was made by Admiral Harold Stark, the former chief of naval operations, now the head of U.S. Naval Forces, Europe. Stark put the younger flag officer at

Time & Life Pictures/Getty Images

Ike meets with his chief of staff, Brig. Gen. Walter Bedell Smith (left) and Maj. Gen. Mark Wayne Clark, Ike's deputy and commander of II Corps.

ease, explaining that "the only real reason for the existence of my office is to assist the United States fighting forces in Europe. You may call on me at any hour, day or night, for anything you wish. And when you do, call me 'Betty," a nickname I always had in the service." Soon after this reassuring encounter, Ike was joined by a fellow Kansan, his senior naval subordinate and amphibious force commander-designate, Rear Admiral Andrew Bennett. There was little for Bennett and his naval subordinates to do yet, but the naval contingent would soon be engaged to the hilt preparing the largest, most complex amphibious assault in history. (America's first amphibious assault of the 20th century, at Guadalcanal, would not take place for more than a month after Ike's arrival in London. Until then, there were literally no "lessons learned" files for Bennett's team to study.)

Ike relied heavily on Mark Clark, who filled in as ad hoc chief of staff pending Beetle Smith's scheduled arrival in early September. Clark, in his capacity as II Corps commanding general, sought out suitable training areas in the English countryside. With Ike's concurrence, the Salisbury Plain was selected and the II Corps command post was established nearby.

For the moment, and for a long time to come, Ike's most important subordinate (and yet another fellow Kansan) was Maj. Gen. John C.H. Lee, a logistician, former infantry division commander, and holdover from the Chaney staff, now head, the ETOUSA Services of Supply (SOS). In addition to providing ETOUSA's administrative backbone, Lee's troops built and manned as needed literally everything ETOUSA required in the way of buildings, dumps, repair facilities, training areas, cantonments, and airfields. Whatever the British had done and would do to accommodate the Americans, Lee's men and women turned it into something better. Lee himself would remain at Ike's side throughout the war.

The AAF contingent in the British Isles was about to grow immensely as Ike settled in. The air organization was set up to look after itself in nearly all particulars, but it was subordinate to ETOUSA. Ike's point of contact with the AAF community was Maj. Gen. Carl "Tooey" Spaatz, who had arrived in England just ahead of Ike. The two hit it off immediately even though Spaatz, like Lee, was Ike's senior in age and had long been his senior in rank. Like Lee, Spaatz never left Ike's side during the war against Germany.

Considering that Ike estimated that his command on English soil, before the armies moved off to France, would top two million Americans, there was really very little on hand to work with when Ike arrived. But plenty was on the way for one of the largest military buildups in history. For all that, though, only two American combat divisions were yet training on British soil and most of the AAF troops as yet were non-airmen in service and support billets doing advance work to support what was already scheduled to become the largest air organization ever devised and the world's first and for two years its only strategic air force.

The peoples of England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland had lived nearly three years awaiting the tangible reality of a world-class ally—this world-class ally—to help them right the wrongs of Fascism and Nazism. Even the small advance phalanxes, when they arrived, made the peoples of the British Isles swoon with relief. Shortly, though, the British would simply be swamped by a tidal wave of richness of spirit and goodwill bubbling over the Americans' richness in material wealth. Soon they would not quite fathom what hit them. And later, the Nazi thugs across the Channel would not know what hit them either.

It was Ike's job to modulate American, British, and Canadian forces to undertake one of the most difficult military challenges in all of history. To do that, he understood that he, a man from the geographic center of a continent-size nation, had somehow to modulate the three cultures while completely surrounded by one of them. From his first day as America's top soldier in the British Isles, he could not wait to get started. □

ESSEN UND

Feeding the troops of the Third Reich was a massive undertaking.

IT WAS NAPOLEON Bonaparte who purportedly said, "An army travels on its stomach."

Toward the goal of feeding his particular army's stomach more efficiently, in 1795 the French general came up with an interesting solution to the problem. He sponsored a contest with a cash prize offered to the first successful demonstration of a means to safely preserve food and thus make it portable. It took 14 years for the prize to find a recipient; in 1809, Nicolas Appert, a French chef, invented a food canning process using glass jars.

In the usual game of European one-upmanship, only a year later the British raised the bar by developing the metal can. However it took another 76 years for someone to figure out a purpose-designed can opener. World War I German soldiers used a hammer and chisel and various sharp or blunt instruments to open their steel cans, but by 1925 the modern serrated-wheel can opener came into use—just in time for World War II and for the Germans and French to go at it again.

But in this new Blitzkrieg war, an efficient and nutritious way of feeding troops, as well as the civilian workforce back home, could mean the difference between winning and losing a battle or a war.

To that end German scientists, including agronomists and nutritionists, were marshaled to devise a plan of food production in step with the Third Reich's ambitions to conquer Europe and eventually turn the East into one large farmland for Greater Germany.

Initially, the individual entrusted with affecting the far-reaching programs was Richard-Walther Darre,

PHOTO 1: MYSTERY MEAT
Wearing a universally understood expression, a German soldier contemplates the contents of his field meal container. One term used to describe a meatless, flavorless soup was *Horst Wessel Suppe,* the ground troops' sardonic name referring to the "empty" story of an early SS man's martyrdom, the basis for the "Horst Wessellied," the Nazi Party's official song.

PHOTO 2: GATHERING AROUND THE GOULASH CANNON
Somewhere on the Russian front, soldiers with less than cheerful anticipation queue up for a meal. Mobile field kitchens could cook while on the move and also featured ovens for baking bread and a means for brewing coffee. The tall stovepipe for venting smoke produced the slang term *Goulaschkanone* ("goulash cannon").

PHOTO 3: HORSE MEAT
A horse has been disemboweled in preparation for a meal. Usually an act of desperation when food supplies have run out, this may not be the case here, as the soldiers seem well fed and in good cheer as they watch the process. The barn appears to be French, so it may be a captured French farm horse being cut into steaks. As the war ground on in the East, tens of thousands of horses literally became mincemeat for starving troops on both sides as well as for civilians.

PHOTO 4: MENU FOR MONDAY—WORLD WAR II PLUS THREE DAYS
In a photo dated September 4, 1939, a cook's unit proudly displays the tools of their trade and a menu board of the day's repast for the troops. The relative tranquility of the photo belies the fact that just three days earlier, on September 1, German forces had invaded neighboring Poland, followed two days later by the declaration of war on Germany by Britain and France and thus the beginning of World War II.

(All Photos from the author's collection)

2

TRINKEN

BY G. PAUL GARSON

3

4

1


2

a German born in Argentina in 1895, educated both in Germany and at King's College in England, and who then served as an artillery officer in World War I. As a certified agronomist, a fervent exponent of the "blood and soil" Nazi ideology, and also an early friend of SS chief Heinrich Himmler, Darre found himself well placed for advancement.

Much of his appeal had to do with his books espousing his claims that Nordic (i.e., German) peoples had been the founding fathers of European culture, specifically the German peasant-farmer. Darre, himself a pig farmer, found himself in like-minded company with Himmler, an ex-chicken farmer. In 1933, the inaugural year of the Third Reich, he was appointed both the National Farmers' Leader (Reichsbauernführer) and the Minister for Food and Agriculture. He also penned a volume about pigs in ancient folklore and other works expressing his racist viewpoints and the means to ensure racial health.

However, Darre's incompetence relative to organizing the German food supply caused him to fall out of favor with Hitler, and he was replaced in 1942 by the more pragmatic Herbert Backe, who kept the post as Reich Food Minister until the end of the war. His main focus was organizing foodstuffs for the war against the Soviet Union, which included feeding Germany's military.

On the whole, the regular German Army foot soldier (*Landser*) received scientifically designed, high-calorie/protein rations. Typically, each soldier carried a daily supply of the so-called *Halbieserne* or "Iron Ration" that contained one 300-gram tin of meat and one 125- or 150-gram unit of hard bread. The canned meat could be *Schmalzfleisch* (a pork product), *Rinderbraten* (roast beef), *Truthahnbraten* (turkey), or *Hahnchenfleisch* (chicken). In addition, there was canned *Fleischkonserve,* its contents generically, and thus ambiguously, labeled "canned meat," which allowed for a number of interpretations.

Another longstanding staple of the German Army's menu of portable food items was the *Erbswurst,* a nourishing soup compressed into a pellet, packaged six to a ration. A pellet was crushed and dropped into a half pint of boiling water. One minute later and the instant soup was ready to eat. Condensed canned tomato soup was also available as a substitute when a field kitchen was not available, soldiers often adding half a can of water and half a can of milk to maximize its flavor. The milk also came condensed in cans.

Elite troops received food "perks" as in the case of *Kampfpackung fur Fallschirmjäger* or "Combat Rations for Paratroops," one item consisting of real canned cheese, but these were issued only prior to a combat mission. The special kit also contained two cans of ham chunks, one bar of ersatz high-energy food, and *Milchkaffee* (powdered milk and instant coffee), as well as *Knäckebrot* and candy drops.

The SS had their exclusive food rations, the cans treated to a special extreme climate coating and painted in a rust-preventing yellow/brown lacquer. Standard rations for SS units in the field consisted of a four-day supply: about 25 ounces of *Graubrot* (gray rye bread); 6-10 ounces of

Fleisch (canned meat) or *Wurst* (canned sausage); some five ounces of vegetables; a half ounce of butter, margarine, jam, or hazelnut paste; either real or ersatz coffee; five grams of sugar; and, oddly enough, six cigarettes, despite the SS leadership's antismoking stance, the rationale being that cigarettes served the troops under combat stress as a "nerve tonic." There were also other special SS supplements, one example being canned *Leberwurst*, a quality liver spread.

The Third Reich's antismoking initiatives, part of the general public health campaign that included protocols about alcohol and exposure to workplace contaminants, was prompted by research conducted in 1939 by German scientist Franz H. Muller, who published the world's first epidemiological, case-control study showing a link between tobacco smoking and lung cancer. The various health programs sought to reduce lost time and expense due to illness, to help produce fit and healthy workers and soldiers and to "preserve the racial health of the Volk."

The Reichs Labor Service (Reichsarbeitdienst), or RAD, was a compulsory paramilitary organization established by law in June 1934 whereby 19- to 25-year-olds, male and female, worked in the fields with farmers or performed other labor for a period of six months within a strictly disciplined program in which they drilled as soldiers but carried spades. With it, Hitler solved Germany's massive unemployment problems, provided cheap labor, and indoctrinated the young. Through RAD, he was able to sidestep the restrictions of the post-World War I Versailles Treaty that sought to limit German military expansion and a means to transition Third Reich youth into a military mold for later incorporation into the Wehrmacht, Kriegsmarine, Luftwaffe, and SS.

During the early years of Hitler's regime, indicative of an improved economy, beer consumption in an already high-beer-consuming country increased by 25 percent. Wine consumption, particularly after the conquest of France, doubled while champagne sales increased fourfold.

Soldiers were allowed to ship home parcels from their posts in occupied territories, which prompted an avalanche of items sent from France, Holland, Belgium, Greece, the Balkans, and

PHOTO 1: LATVIAN IMPORTS
German soldiers appear to be unloading provisions from a Latvian railroad car; Soviet Cyrillic lettering is visible. Operation Barbarossa, launched on June 22, 1941, quickly overran the Baltic States of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia, displacing Red Army forces that had previously annexed and occupied those countries as a result of the 1939 German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact that had enabled the division of Poland between the two countries.

PHOTO 2: INDUSTRIAL DEEP-FRYER
Seen within a spic-and-span, state-of-the-art military base kitchen, the staff poses proudly by one of their massive cooking vats. A spigot is visible from which the grease is released into a floor trap for recycling. Grease was a component used in the production of explosives.

PHOTO 3: GUARDING THE KITCHEN
Bayonets at the ready, a contingent of soldiers exaggeratedly guard the all-important *Feldküchen* (field kitchen), seen transported within a larger wagon. Pulled either by a motorized vehicle or by horse, mobile field kitchens or *Feldküchennwagen* incorporated a wood, coal, or charcoal-fed stove. The compact unit brought hot meals, usually stews or soup, to the troops in the field. One frequently seen item on the menu was *Frontkameradensuppe*, which consisted of a stew of beans, potatoes and ham (aka "the comrades").

PHOTO 4: MOBILE MUNCHING
A server ladles out a liquid repast as soldiers at a mobile kitchen display a variety of expressions.

1

2

Norway. By early 1942, German families were receiving a cornucopia of foodstuffs, including fresh fruits, whole hams, and even lard, butter, and chickens—not to mention non- food items such as silk stockings, perfumes, shoes, and quality soaps—all of which contrived to fuel a healthy black market in Germany.

Soldiers serving alongside their Italian allies occasionally sampled their fare, including what they called *Mussolini-Kartoffeln* or "Mussolini potatoes," the German term for macaroni and spaghetti.

Sweet treats of one kind or another were much prized, and some even served a medicinal purpose. Soldiers returning from an especially taxing duty or action, for example, were eligible to receive *Zusatzverpflegung für Frontkämpfer* or "Supplemental Rations for Frontline Soldiers." Packaged in a pink bag, they included individually wrapped pieces of fruit candy. In addition, a soldier's nutritional allotment included *Kandiezucter,* a rock candy issued as a sugar ration.

Another sweet, the lemon-flavored *Zitronentropfen,* helped frontline troops deal with severe weather conditions, and were also handed out at aid stations to wounded troops. Another popular treat was the mint candy Vivil found in Army ration packs as well as Luftwaffe in-flight and survival packs. Vivil, because of its relative mildness, was preferred over other, stronger mint candies when something was needed to camouflage the scent of alcohol. Luftwaffe personnel also received *Waffelgebuck,* a 100-gram chocolate wafer bar, often a popular subject of trade with other Wehrmacht branches.

Because the Nazi regime feared that negative home morale would undermine the war effort (as it did in World War I), they took special effort to see that wartime rations were the highest in Europe. The lands conquered by the German military machine were stripped of their foodstuffs, not only to feed German citizens, but as part of an overall plan to promote widespread starvation among the subjugated peoples in order to "depopulate" the Slavic lands and make room for German Lebensraum and new Aryan landowners. The plan envisioned by the German Ministry of Agriculture in 1940 projected the death of some 30,000,000 Russian civilians. Toward that goal, by early 1942 some 3,000,000 Soviet POWs

3

4

5

PHOTO 1: FOOD FOR THOUGHT—CURSES IN CHALK
"God Punish England" reads the inscription on the anti-aircraft gun behind the soldiers as they dine from their mess kits. The writing barely legible on the gun barrel reads, "Always Shoot a Pole."

PHOTO 2: CELEBRATION
Dressed in their *Waffenrock* or "walking out" dress uniforms, a group of soldiers celebrates some occasion with extraordinarily large bottles of champagne. A clue to the photo's strategic location is found on the wall behind them that reads, in part, "The Two Moors is situated directly on the Rhine and the railway station."

PHOTO 3: SPRING THAW ON THE EASTERN FRONT CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION
A more casual pose is taken as soldiers pour libations somewhere in Russia. To conserve resources, lace-up boots seen here replaced earlier, and more popular, full leather footwear.

PHOTO 4: WATERMELONS FOR THE WEHRMACHT
During a hot summer day in Russia, infantry troops have apparently liberated a watermelon field (and a farmer's cart as well) as they carry and eat their booty on the march. Like so many armies before them, the German Army was, in large part, instructed to "live off the land" when supplies could not reach them—especially in the early days of the invasion of the Soviet Union when the rapid advances outstripped slower moving wagon trains.

PHOTO 5: STANDARD-ISSUE SANDWICH VS. PERKS
Along with the various rations of meat, a soldier's roster of breads included *Knackebrot,* a hard, crisp, whole wheat cracker-like product; *Hartzweiback,* a hard biscuit more like bread than crackers; and *Hartkeks,* a hard biscuit/cracker combination produced in several shapes. The bread and meat were sealed in a paper sack, a label listing contents and manufacturer—in effect the Wehrmacht version of the sandwich.

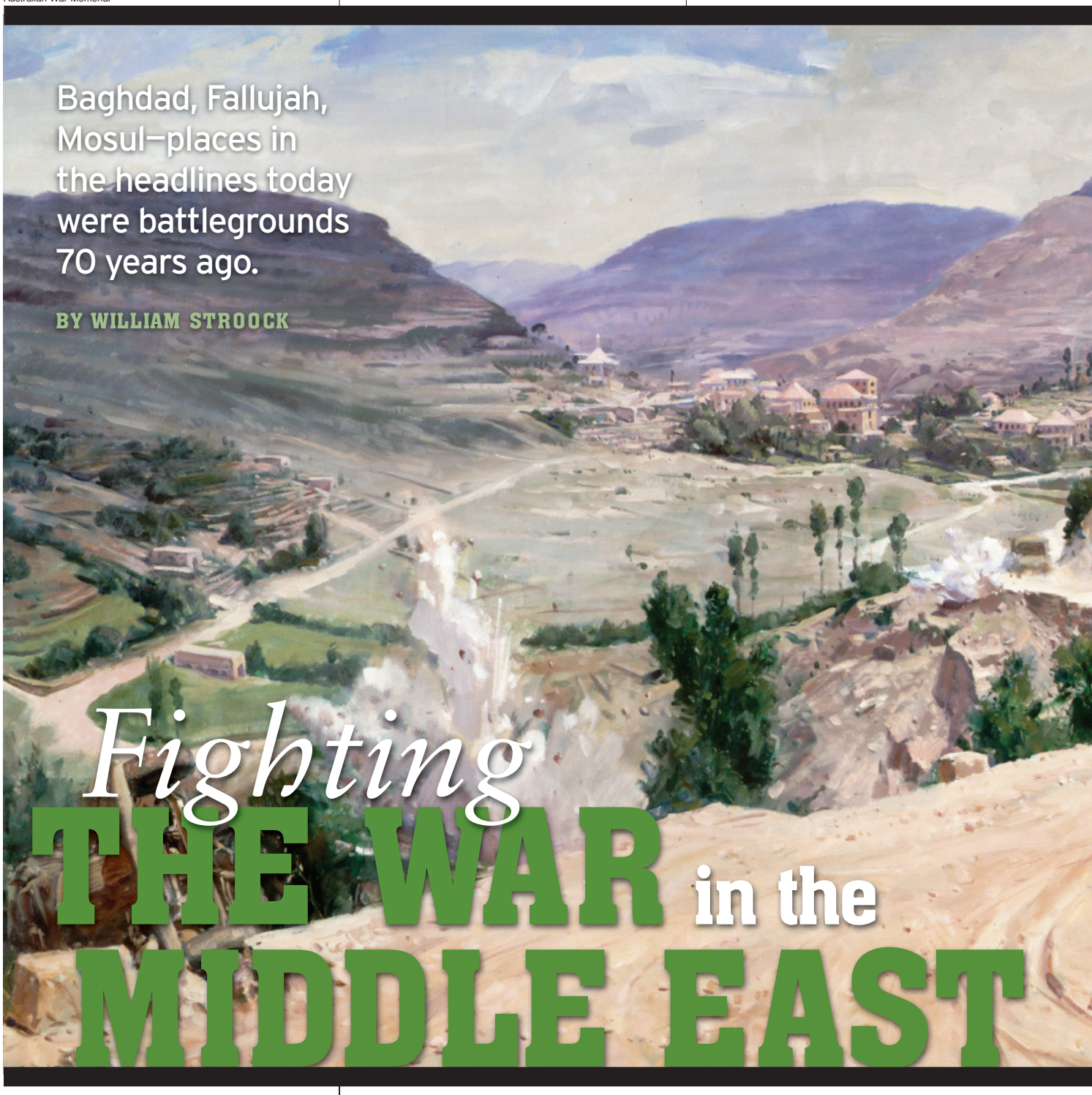
had died, most by starvation. Hundreds of thousands more of all nationalities would slowly starve to death in concentration and slave labor camps across Europe.

In the latter stages of the war, as German home front food supplies were both rationed and in increasingly short supply, various "fillers" were added for substance (if not nutrition) to loaves of bread, while ersatz coffees were made from chicory as well as from roasted and ground acorns, beechnuts, barley, and even chickpeas and oats.

Most lacked any caffeine and thus any real benefit to soldiers running on few calories and less sleep. Civilians found their allotments of sugar and meats doled out by the ounce. As a result, many kept *Daschschwein* or "roof pigs"—the term describing cats raised as food, often in rooftop cages.

As a side note, in September 2009 the German government overturned Nazi-era treason convictions, clearing the charges made against its citizens and soldiers who had been convicted of "harming the nation," which included black marketeers. ■

Australian War Memorial



Baghdad, Fallujah, Mosul—places in the headlines today were battlegrounds 70 years ago.

BY WILLIAM STROOCK

Fighting THE WAR in the MIDDLE EAST

FOR MORE THAN a century the Middle East was the British Empire's vital link between the Mediterranean and India. In the early years of World War II, the Middle East was vulnerable to Axis intrigue. Working with the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, in exile since fomenting the Arab Revolt in 1936, Hitler sought to undermine the British position there via the canard of Arab nationalism, stating that the Arab Freedom Movement, as he called it, was "our natural ally against England."

Therefore, German and Italian agents were active throughout the Middle East. In Iraq, with the aid of the Grand Mufti, they helped to organize a coup against the more or less neutral monarchy.

Axis agents were also active in Persia (Iran), whose shah tried to maintain neutrality in an ever-widening war. British planners not only feared for the kingdom's oil wealth but saw Persia as a potential logistical lifeline to the Soviets.

Lastly, there was Syria. Under Vichy rule, Syria was a dangerous threat to communi-

The Arab Revolt was not a full-scale military uprising but a prolonged series of small-scale actions between British forces and Arab irregulars. When not fighting the British, Arab forces attacked Jewish settlements and British infrastructure, such as the Iraqi oil pipeline, in Palestine. There were also general strikes and acts of civil disobedience. The revolt led to two ironic outcomes: British reinforcements flooded into Palestine, and the Jewish Agency there was forced to expand its militia into what came to be known as the Haganah and the Palmach, the forerunner of the Israeli Defense Force.

The British commander in Palestine, General Archibald Wavell, received help from an unlikely source: Major Orde Wingate, an intelligence staff officer recently arrived from Sudan. Acting on his own, Wingate took several unorthodox actions. He worked closely with the Haganah, delivering to them arms and intelligence. Eventually, he persuaded Wavell to allow him to train Haganah fighters and integrate them with British troops. This force of about 150 men was divided into three units called Special

LEFT: Australian troops on a narrow mountain road west of Jezzine, Lebanon, come under fire from Vichy French artillery and mortars. The Aussies fought the German-aligned Vichy forces for possession of the town over the course of several weeks, finally capturing it on June 28, 1941.
BELOW: Club-wielding British troops force Palestinian rioters to disperse during a demonstration in 1933.

Imperial War Museum

cations between the British Middle East and India—a threat made all the worse by German success in Greece and Crete.

When the war began, Palestine was ripe for subversion. There had been trouble in the British Mandate since mass Jewish immigration began after World War I. The worst incident of violence occurred in 1929, when the Grand Mufti incited local Muslims to riot after Jews began praying at the Western Wall. This was followed by the Hebron massacre of dozens of Jews, also at the hands of the Mufti and his allies.

Nights Squads (SNSs). The SNSs fought in small units under the cover of darkness.

Rather than play defense, Wingate sent his squads out into the field where he aggressively sought out Arab guerrillas, tracking their bands, setting ambushes, and assaulting their hideouts. By 1938, the various Arab guerrilla movements avoided Wingate and his SNSs altogether. Thanks in part to concessions granted by the British, including restrictions on Jewish immigration and land purchasing as well as the efforts of Wingate, among others, the revolt gradually petered out. But the Axis/Arab threat to the British position would rise again.

ullstein bild

Imperial War Museum

ABOVE: An Iraqi rebel gun crew shells British positions near Ramadi. RIGHT: A Rolls-Royce armored car, part of Maj. Gen. George Clark's Hab Force, takes up a position near the besieged RAF base at Habbaniya, Iraq, May 1941. OPPOSITE: Iraqi tribal warriors prepare to assault British forces.

IRAQ

After being granted independence in 1930, Iraq remained an important way station between British possessions in the Mediterranean and India. It was a major source of oil for Britain as well, with two pipelines—one running to Haifa, the other to Tripoli. By treaty, the Iraqi government had to grant British forces free access to and through Iraq, allowing Britain to maintain military bases in the country and helping to defend those facilities in the event of war. In 1941, there were two Royal Air Force bases in Iraq—one at Shaibah, north of Basra, and the other at Habbaniya, west of Fallujah.

Unfortunately for Great Britain, Iraq was a hotbed of pro-Axis sentiment. Since 1937, a secret cabal of Iraqi officers, known as the Golden Square, had intrigued against the Iraqi monarchy, which was led by a weak regent in the name of the four-year-old future king. Worse, the government was headed by Prime Minister Rashid Ali el Gailani, an Axis sympathizer who had helped found the anti-Western and anti-Semitic Muslim Brotherhood. As such, Rashid Ali was in close contact with the Golden Square. A third problem was created by the presence in Baghdad of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem. The Italian consulate was also active, spreading Axis propaganda throughout the country.

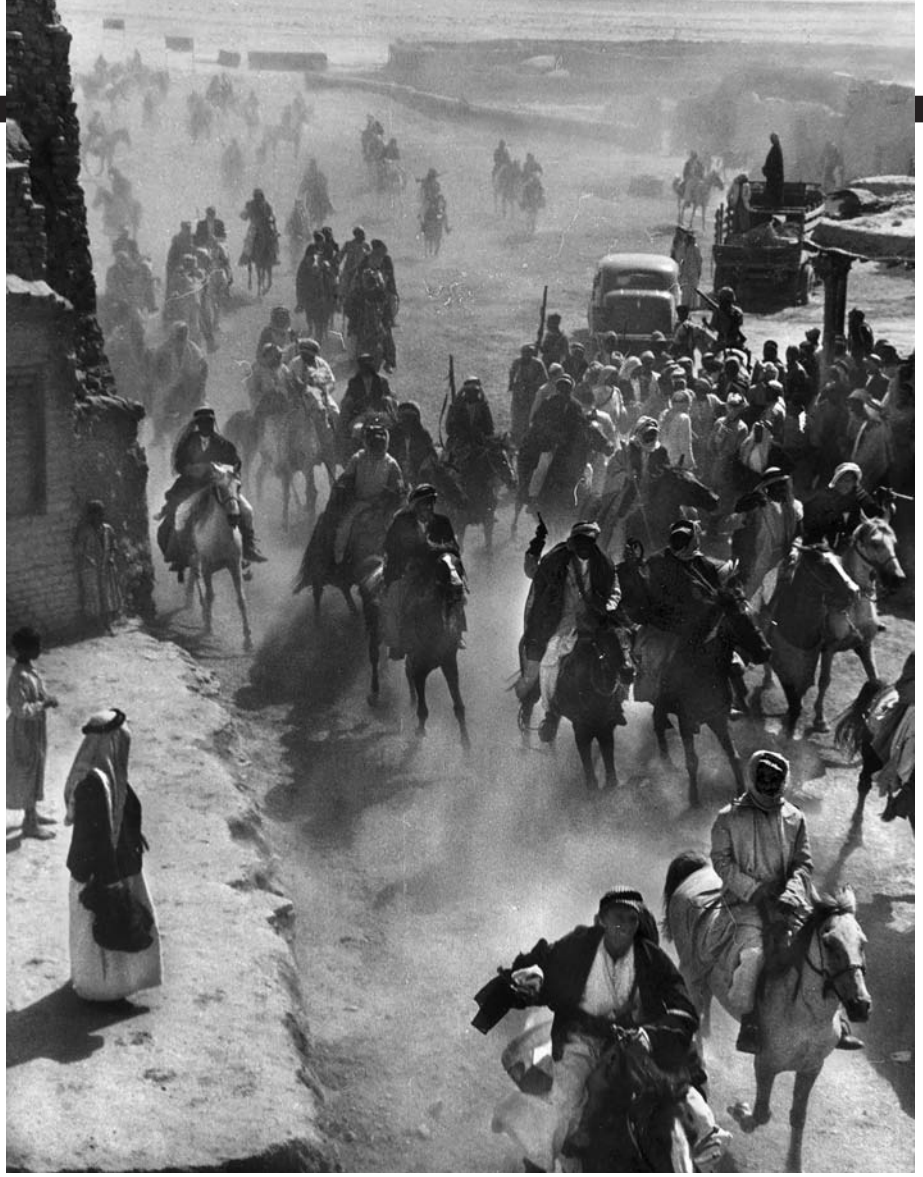
With internal tensions rising and the threat of open civil war growing between the Golden Square and the regent, Rashid Ali resigned in January 1941. Although out of office, he continued to intrigue against the regent and the British. Then, on April 3, 1941, the Golden Square seized the government and reinstalled Rashid Ali in the office of prime minster. Rashid Ali quickly warned the British against any intervention and by midmonth asked Germany for military assistance.

The British government was not idle, and on Churchill's orders it scrambled to assemble the troops needed to defend their interests in Iraq, namely the air bases, the pipelines, and, of course, Basra. A small expeditionary force was scraped together in Palestine, and a battalion of the King's Own Royal Regiment (Lancaster) was flown into Habbaniya to support the six companies of Iraqi levies and the No. 1 Armoured Car Company (RAF) already present there. Dozens of aircraft were at the base as well, but these old and outdated models were good only for training purposes. Two squadrons of modern Wellington bombers were flown from Egypt to Shaiba.

Further reinforcements were found in India, with the 10th Indian Infantry Division (commanded by the soon-to-be-famous General William Slim) being dispatched to Basra. When informed by the British ambassador that the troops would be arriving, Rashid Ali refused to allow them into the country. The troops came anyway, with one brigade landing unopposed at Basra on April 30. Upon arriving, the division's chief of staff, Colonel Ouvry Roberts, was dispatched to Habbaniya to command ground forces there. A battle was brewing.

The Battle for Habbaniya

Instead of confronting the Indian Brigade in Basra, Rashid Ali chose to marshal his forces against the British air base at Habbaniya. This was a wise move, as the Indian



ullstein bild

troops would most likely have sliced right through Iraqi Army units. Also, taking Habbaniya would prevent Royal Air Force units from interfering with any Axis reinforcements that might be sent to help the Golden Square.

Iraqi troops arrived in the vicinity of Habbaniya in the early-morning hours of April 30 and gradually assembled atop the heights south of the base; most of the Iraqi troops thought that they were on a training exercise. By the morning of May 1, the units included one infantry brigade, one mechanized artillery brigade, a squadron of armored cars, and a mechanized machine-gun company. Additionally, Iraqi troops occupied the village of Dhibban to the east on the Euphrates, another company entered Fallujah, and a brigade took up positions in Ramadi.

Being totally exposed, the base commander, Air Vice Marshal H.G. Smart, acting on orders from the prime minister that read, "If you have to strike, strike hard. Use all necessary force," attacked first. On the morning of May 2, 18 Audax, nine Oxford, and six Gordon bombers took off from the airfield and bombed the Iraqi positions. The Iraqis responded by bombarding the airfield, revealing their positions to the British aircrews above who swooped in and attacked. Wellingtons out of Shaibah also joined the fray, while Iraqi aircraft flew from their bases and hit Habbaniya, causing minor damage. During the day's aerial battle, which saw more than 200 sorties, the British lost 22 aircraft.

A pair of ground engagements punctuated the action in the air. The first of these saw a squad from No. 8 Kurdish Company cross the Euphrates River and attack an Iraqi gun emplacement along the road north of the base. The squad came under heavy machine-gun fire and had to retreat, though the emplacement was later destroyed from the air. In the second action, No. 4 Assyrian Company of the Iraqi Levies repelled an attack by several armored cars and light tanks.

There followed several more days of heavy air attacks by the RAF on Iraqi formations south of the base, on convoys along the Fallujah road, and on Iraqi airfields around Mosul and Baghdad as well. One series of raids on May 4 conducted by Wellington bombers destroyed 20 enemy aircraft. In all, these efforts destroyed or disabled at least 50 Iraqi planes. The toll taken on Iraqi troops around Habbaniya mounted while their morale plummeted, until they withdrew on the night of May 6; British morning patrols discovered that the escarpment had been abandoned. The patrols pushed east until they ran into strong resistance at Dhibban. Colonel Roberts reinforced the patrol with C and D Companies from the King's Own and pressed the attack. By midafternoon they had taken the village and captured more than 500 prisoners. The commander of Iraqi forces in Fallujah dispatched a column to try to retake the village but it was, in the words of AVM Smart, "virtually annihilated" from the air.

The March to Fallujah

Smart and Roberts decided that the next logical step was an attack on Fallujah (and the key Iron Bridge across the Euphrates) as a prelude to a move against Baghdad. To assist, a company of Gurkhas, some artillery personnel, and sappers were flown in from Basra. More important, a reinforced mechanized brigade known as Hab Force was making its way to Habbaniya from Palestine. Commanded by Maj. Gen. George Clark of the 1st Cavalry Division, Hab Force advanced along the pipeline and garrisoned strategic points along the way.

Upon occupying the town of Rutbah, Clark put several units under the command of Brig. Gen. J.J. Kingstone and sent

Both: Imperial War Museum

them to reinforce Roberts. Designated "Kingcol," the column had trouble making its way across the desert and was strafed several times by German aircraft that had arrived in Mosul. German planes also attacked Habbaniya. In the meantime, Iraqi troops breached the dykes or bunds along the Euphrates, flooding the area.

Meanwhile, Roberts's forces set out from Habbaniya on the night of May 18. Three columns (Iraqi Levies, King's Own, and 2/4 Gurkha Rifles) crossed the Euphrates at Dhibban, where a makeshift ferry had been built, and moved toward Notch Falls, north of Fallujah, thereby avoiding the flooded main road. A fourth column advanced along the main road leading to the town, while a fifth column (one company of the King's Own) was airlifted behind Fallujah and took up a position overlooking the road to Baghdad.

At the same time, RAF planes bombed Iraqi positions inside Fallujah. The three columns had arrived on the western outskirts of Fallujah by early afternoon and had the Iron Bridge across the Euphrates in their sights. Because Iraqi troops ignored surrender pamphlets dropped by the RAF, an assault on the bridge commenced at 2:45 PM. After an hourlong artillery barrage, at 5 PM the Iraqi Levies stormed the bridge and took it without suffering a single casualty.

Three days later, as they were consolidating their hold on the town, the British were caught unawares by a counterattack launched by the 6th Iraqi Infantry Brigade. In the early-morning hours, a British patrol sent to investigate reports of enemy movement encountered an Iraqi column on the road to Baghdad. The patrol brought the column under fire but quickly retreated. The Iraqis advanced and unleashed a mortar bombardment on the British defense line north of town, held by C Company of the King's Own. Under heavy fire, C Company fell back into town.

The Iraqis followed but were stopped by two companies of Iraqi Levies before they could advance on the Iron Bridge. The 6th Brigade then attacked Fallujah's southeastern defenses but made no progress against

ABOVE: British soldiers provide cover fire for Royal Engineers building a bridge near Ramadi, an Iraqi rebel stronghold. BELOW: Armed with Enfield rifles, British troops view Baghdad from across the Tigris River, June 1941.

A Company of the King's Own. By then, Kingstone had arrived with A and D Companies of the Essex Regiment and C Company of the Household Cavalry and, in the house-to-house fighting that followed, ejected the remaining Iraqi troops from Fallujah.

On to Baghdad

British forces remained at Fallujah for the next week while the RAF attacked targets of opportunity. These included a raid by a flight of Audax bombers on an Iraqi Army fuel dump that destroyed more than a million gallons of fuel and the dropping of surrender pamphlets on Iraqi troops in Ramadi. Most important, a series of raids were launched against the fields housing German aircraft around Mosul, Kirkuk, and the Rasheed field southeast of Baghdad. Air base facilities were heavily damaged, as were 14 aircraft on the ground.

On May 28, the advance resumed, with one column (two companies of the Essex Regiment, the Household Cavalry, and three armored cars) advancing directly along the Fallujah-Baghdad road, with a second squadron from the Household Cavalry, the Arab Legion plus some armored cars on the northern flank, and moving toward Baghdad's northeastern suburbs. The columns advanced under heavy air cover that bombed Iraqi strongpoints and troop concentrations in and around Baghdad. The north column met determined Iraqi resistance at Kadhimain, on the banks of the Tigris.

An attack led by the Household Cavalry failed to punch through, leaving the column dangerously exposed should the 3rd Iraqi Infantry Brigade stationed at Mosul choose to march south. Therefore, the Arab Legion was pulled off the bank of the Tigris and sent north to protect the flanks.

Restoration

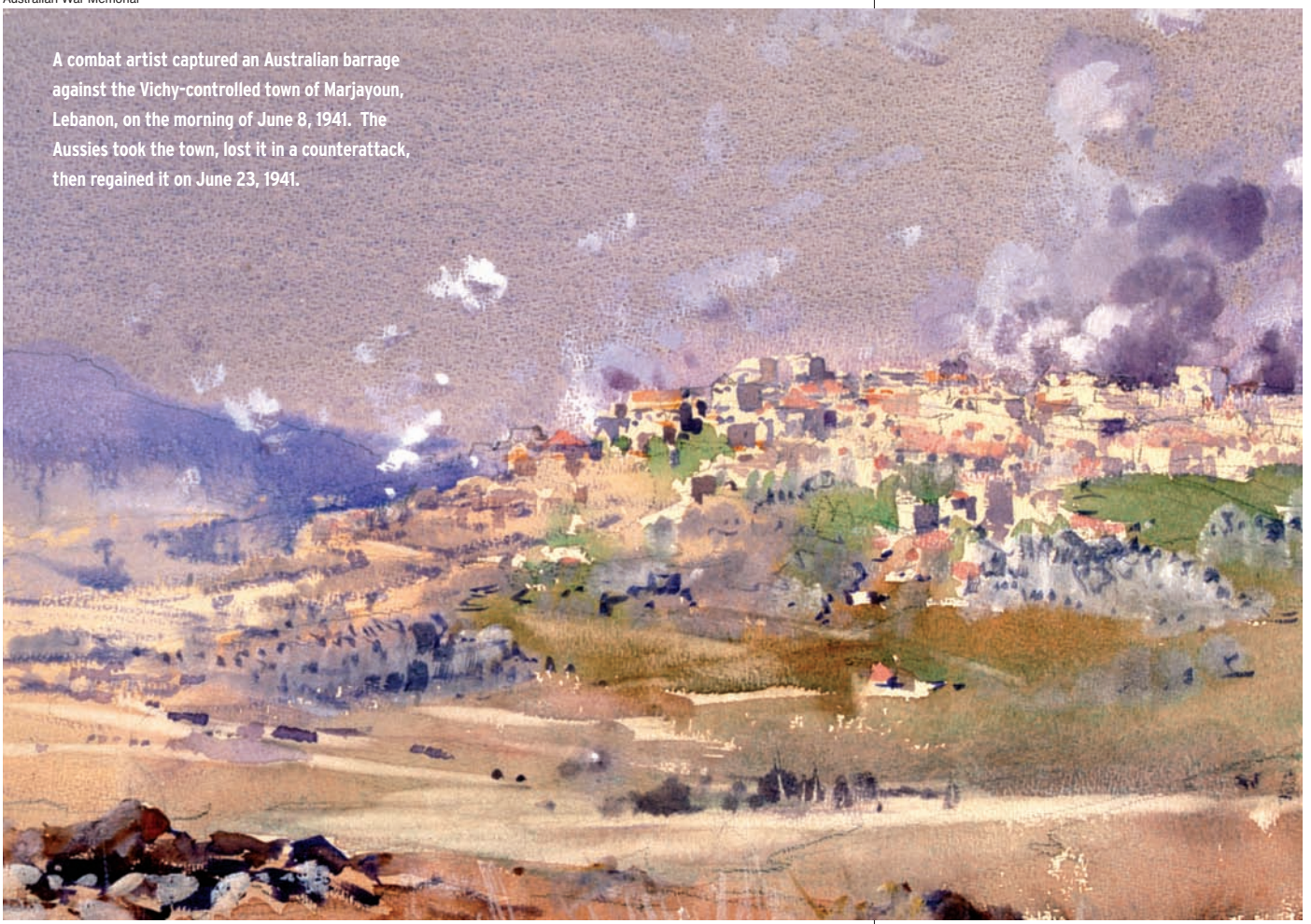
On May 30, with the main column just outside Baghdad on the Whabash Canal and shelling Iraqi Army positions in Baghdad and the 10th Indian Infantry Division advancing from Basra, authorities from the Golden Square contacted the British embassy and requested a cease-fire. It was later learned that Rashid Ali had fled Baghdad. In the early-morning hours of May 31, both Smart and Clark met an Iraqi delegation at the Whabash Canal Bridge. The terms of an armistice were quickly hammered out and the fighting was officially brought to an end. The regent was back in Baghdad on June 1. By the end of the month, the entire 10th Indian Infantry Division was garrisoning key positions in Iraq.

VICHY SYRIA

On the heels of their success in Iraq, a much harder fight loomed for British and Commonwealth troops in the Middle East, this time in the colony of a former ally. After the fall of France in June 1940, Vichy Syria adopted a policy of neutrality. However, as the war dragged on, the Axis was gradually able to wring concessions from Vichy authorities in the Levant.

At first, these came in the form of landing rights at French airfields. Later, Axis diplomats demanded and received the right to use French ports in Syria. So alarmed were British authorities that they contacted the Vichy high commissioner in Syria, General Henri Dentz, and asked what his response to a German invasion would be. Dentz replied that he would resist any invasion but also added that he would obey any instructions received from Vichy. Churchill ordered General Wavell

Australian War Memorial



A combat artist captured an Australian barrage against the Vichy-controlled town of Marjayoun, Lebanon, on the morning of June 8, 1941. The Aussies took the town, lost it in a counterattack, then regained it on June 23, 1941.

to prepare British forces in the Middle East for an invasion of Syria.

Though stretched thin by the battle for Iraq and the ongoing campaign against Rommel's Afrika Korps, resources were available for an attack on Syria. In Palestine, these included two brigades of the elite 7th Australian Division, the 5th Brigade of the 4th Indian Infantry Division, and elements of several diverse formations including an armored car squadron, several troops of the 1st Cavalry Division, and two brigades of Free French troops, many recently defected from Vichy Syria.

Imperial War Museum

British troops search for snipers amid the ancient ruins of the Temple of Baal Shamin at Palmyra, Syria, in July 1941.

With them, Wavell planned an advance on two fronts, one on the coast, the other inland just east of the Bekaa Valley, with the goal of taking Beirut and Damascus. A third effort would be mounted out of Iraq. General Clark's Hab Force (now numbering three regiments, an artillery battery, an antitank battery, and the Arab Legion) would attack the city of Palmyra, just over the Syria/Iraq border.

The battle would, for the most part, be fought in Lebanon and southwestern Syria, across territory that would see large armored and guerrilla clashes in the later 20th and early 21st centuries. There is a narrow plain and road up the coast, running through the towns of Tyre, Sidon, Damour, and Beirut. Inland is rocky, hilly terrain easily defended. Farther east lies the Bekaa Valley. Southern Lebanon is divided from the rest of the country by the Litani River. There was a Vichy fort and barracks near the mouth of the Litani, occupying a commanding position above the coast road. Beyond the Bekaa Valley is flat desert, and eventually, Damascus.

Vichy forces on the ground were under the command of General de Virdhilhac, recently arrived from France. He had at his disposal six regiments of 15,000 regular troops, one mixed-colonial, one Foreign Legion, and four African. These were supported by 9,000 cavalry, both horse and mechanized. There were 10,000 native levies as well. The Vichy air force there numbered 90 aircraft and would have uncontested air superiority in the east for several days.

The Attack on Palmyra

Palmyra was an important city and oil terminal in eastern Syria. Defending it were two companies of the Foreign Legion and a company of the French Light Desert Infantry. The job of taking Palmyra fell to Hab Force and the Arab Legion which gathered at the H3, an airfield in western Iraq. On June 20, Hab Force crossed into Syria. General Clark's plan called for the force to split into three columns with the goal of hitting Palmyra simultaneously from the south, east, and west.

The advance did not go well. Arab raiders from the Druze Mountains to the north played havoc with the columns, as did Vichy aircraft. The Household Cavalry and Warwickshires met stiff resistance at the T-3 oil terminal, 20 miles east of Palmyra. General Clark elected to leave a blocking force there and push on east. The western column of Wiltshires took a position atop the ridge south and west of Palmyra but was unsupported by the other columns and therefore unable to advance.

The arrival of a squadron of Australian P-40s cleared the skies of Vichy aircraft while General John Bagot Glubb's vaunted 20,000-man Arab Legion systematically cleared the desert of Vichy raiders. It now fell to the east and south columns, which doggedly pushed on and gradually surrounded Palmyra. By July 1, the Wiltshires, now supported by the Essex Battalion, cleared the ridge and fought their way into Palmyra. After two days of close-quarters fighting, the Vichy garrison finally surrendered. Those at T-3 followed suit. Elements of Hab Force continued west and linked up with the Australians advancing through central Lebanon.

Australian War Memorial

ABOVE: Free French troops, part of two brigades brought in to fight against their countrymen, march on parade near Damascus once the city fell on June 22, 1941. BELOW: An RAF Bristol Blenheim IV bombs enemy positions in Syria.

Imperial War Museum

The Drive on Damascus

On the night of June 8, the 5th Indian Infantry Brigade, commanded by General W.L. Lloyd, together with the two Free French brigades, met no Vichy resistance until they came to the town of Sheikh Meskine, which they took in a pitched battle that lasted through the afternoon. In the meantime, the 5th Indian Infantry Brigade drove Vichy forces out of Kuneitra (on the Golan Heights) and handed the advance off to the Free French, who pushed north and encountered heavy resistance based in the hills above the town of Kissoue.

The Free French took a pair of hills east of the town, where they repelled an armored counterattack. On June 15, the Indians then took over the attack, fought their way into the town, and then defended against a heavy counterattack. At the same time, the Free French renewed their push, attacking and taking a hill north of the town. This was followed by an attack by two Indian battalions on the last Vichy position in the vicinity of Sheikh Meskine, this one on a hill west of the town, which they took in a two-pronged night assault.

While the Vichy counterattack at Marjayoun (discussed shortly) had ground the Australian offensive there to a halt, in the east General Lloyd was readying for a push on Damascus. The operation began with an attack on the village of Kissoue about 10 miles south of the prize. Rather than gradually envelop the town, General Lloyd sent an Indian battalion against it in a surprise night attack that quickly overran Vichy defenses.

Fighting for the surrounding hills, both by the Indians and Free French, was more severe, and there was a Vichy counterattack on Kissoue proper by tanks and horse cavalry, which Allied troops turned back with heavy losses. Following up this success, Jebel Madani, a hill north of the town, was taken on June 16, again by a quick night assault. Damascus was a bare 10 miles away.

The first task was to take Mezze, a small village dominating the main road north to Damascus. Like other Vichy positions, it was heavily defended. Again, Lloyd unleashed a night attack. The plan was for two Indian battalions to advance on the village and cut the Vichy communications with the coast. At the same time, a Free French brigade would move on the city proper.

The attack got under way in the early-morning hours of June 19. This time, however, Vichy troops were waiting for such a move. When the two Indian battalions advanced, they were met by a torrent of machine-gun fire, both from positions in front of Mezze and from the woods to the left of the village. The Indians pushed on, though, and fought their way into the town. Follow-on companies took up positions at Kafr Sous, a small village to Mezze's right.

Though the Indian part of the operation was a success, the Free French brigade failed to advance on Damascus, leaving the Indians' right flank uncovered. The inevitable Vichy counterattack began at 9 AM. A battalion of infantry supported by tanks advanced down the road from Damascus and quickly forced an Indian

Both: Imperial War Museum

infantry company, which had dug in just up the road, back into Mezze. From there, the Vichy tanks blasted their way into the town and reduced Indian positions there one by one.

The fighting raged throughout the day, with the Indians being squeezed into a small pocket—a walled garden—within the village. From here, they lashed out at the Vichy tanks and managed to hold on through the rest of the day and into the night, when they were finally forced to surrender for lack of ammunition. An Australian infantry battalion had just arrived from Palestine; Lloyd sent them up the road to Mezze.

The Aussies cleared Vichy defenses just south of the village and fought their way inside, securing it once again by sundown on the 20th. In conjunction with this effort, two Punjabi companies, which had taken positions in the woods south of Mezze, attacked Vichy positions in the hills to the west, taking them after a day's hard fighting.

That night, the Australians moved north and cut the road to Beirut and also took a pair of Vichy positions in the hills west of Damascus, though one had to be abandoned when Vichy forces counterattacked. There were heavy Vichy counterattacks the next day as well against the Australians in Mezze and on the Beirut road, though they were stopped. Knowing that Damascus could not be rescued, and hearing Allied appeals for withdrawal broadcast on the open radio, General Dentz decided to abandon the capital. Vichy forces there withdrew to the northwest without incident. A Free French brigade entered the city on June 22.

From there, the Free French drove north in pursuit of Vichy forces while the Australians, in conjunction with the British 16th Brigade, pushed west along the road to Beirut and encountered stiff Vichy resistance atop Jebel Mazar. Dug into the slopes of the hill and supported by tanks, Vichy forces stopped the Allied advance in its tracks. On June 26, a combined attack by one Australian company and two British clawed its way up the slope under

ABOVE: British gunners blast enemy positions near Beirut, July 9, 1941. BELOW: An RAF Westland Lysander Mark I flies over the Beirut waterfront shortly after the city fell to the British in July 1941.

grueling artillery fire and drove the enemy from the hill. The Australians clung to their positions through several Vichy counterattacks throughout June 27 before reluctantly withdrawing that night.

The Drive on Beirut

Just after midnight on the morning of June 8, the Australian 21st Brigade crossed the

border and drove north along the coast road toward Tyre against light resistance. The brigade pushed onto the banks of the Litani against light resistance. On the right, the 25th Brigade advanced for the town of Marjayoun, where they were halted by unusually stiff Vichy resistance.

Over the next week, the Australian 21st Brigade saw heavy fighting as it advanced up the coast road. Its crossing of the Litani was helped by the landing of a commando battalion at the river's mouth, though the commandos took heavy casualties in the subsequent fighting.

After crossing the Litani, the Aussies fought their way past several Vichy roadblocks, often featuring troops dug into caves on the side of the road. Once past a block, the Australian advance would be further slowed by a quick Vichy counterattack usually comprising several light tanks or armored cars.

On June 13 there was again heavy fighting just south of Sidon, where a battalion-level attack was stopped by Vichy defenders. Not until more artillery was brought up in conjunction with supporting naval gunfire were the Australians able to work around the flank and get onto the heights above Sidon, compelling Vichy troops to pull out.

Farther inland, on the morning of June 10, the Australian 25th Brigade opened its assault on Marjayoun and, with heavy artillery support, pushed its way into the town and accepted the surrender of Vichy forces there later that day. From Marjayoun, they advanced farther north for Jezzine. On June 14, the brigade ran into more Vichy resistance on a hill south of Jezzine, which the Australians had to take at bayonet point. From there, they gradually worked around the town's flanks, entering it that night once Vichy troops abandoned it.

At this point, General de Virdhilhac mounted a counterattack. The first blow fell on Australian forces at Marjayoun. As several companies were clearing the hills above town, the garrison remaining (a reinforced infantry company) was not strong enough to hold on and had to withdraw. The brigade's commander scraped reinforcements together and struck back on June 17 but was unable to make any headway against the entrenched Vichy troops. A second effort on the 19th fought through Vichy defenses and into town but was pushed out again by a Vichy armored counterattack, though the Aussies did destroy several tanks.

The effort against Marjayoun was not renewed until June 23, when elements of the recently arrived British 16th Brigade attacked Vichy positions east of the town. After these fell, Vichy forces evacuated Marjayoun, this time for good.

In conjunction with the assault on Marjayoun, a Vichy battalion attacked Australian troops at Jezzine. From the 15th through the 18th, Vichy forces pressed in on Jezzine, with the Australian battalion there (2/31st) turning back every determined assault. A Vichy attack, led by several tanks and armored cars, also fell on the Fusiliers Battalion garrisoning Kuneitra, which, lacking anti-guns, had to surrender the town.

Reinforcements arrived in the form of the British 6th Division. In conjunction with the Australian 25th Brigade, they reduced Jezzine, with one brigade advancing north, completing the envelopment of the town. On the morning of June 28, an Australian patrol entered Jezzine without a fight. Vichy troops had vanished during the night.

The final obstacle to Beirut was the line of Vichy defenses along the Damour River about 10 miles south of Beirut. Vichy forces, amounting to four battalions, occupied a strong position atop a ridge on the north bank. Even so, these were not enough to hold the entire area, and their left flank was wide open. On the night of July 5, one battalion of the 17th Brigade launched a holding attack on the ridge while another crossed the river under cover of a heavy artillery barrage and pushed north past the ridge.

By the 7th, the battalion had taken up positions directly east of Damour. At this

Imperial War Museum

A Bren gun carrier manned by Indian troops heads toward Damascus. A disabled Vichy FT-17 tank lies on the right side of the road.

Both: Imperial War Museum

point they were subjected to a Vichy counterattack, which spoiled their continued advance. Reinforcements in the form of another battalion arrived, which helped renew the drive for Damour, the outskirts of which they entered. Other elements continued north in an effort to cut the town off from Beirut.

Fighting in Damour proper continued throughout the 7th and into the 8th before the Australians, with one battalion advancing from the east and another from the north, were able to push Vichy troops out of the town. Meanwhile, engineers, under heavy fire from the ridge, managed to throw a bridge across the river, allowing tanks and infantry to push across. However, they were unable to advance much past the riverbank because of heavy fire from the ridge. The Australians were unable to advance until the 9th, when a heavy naval bombardment finally cleared a path for them. The road to Beirut was now open.

With Palmyra and Damascus in enemy hands and the Australians slowly but steadily grinding their way toward Beirut, on the 10th General Dentz began a parlay. After day-long, face-to-face negotiations between Dentz and General Wilson, and with the American consul-general in Beirut helping to mediate, an agreement was reached. Vichy troops would surrender with full honors of war and be given the opportunity to join the Free French.

Disappointingly, less than half, about 6,500, did so; the rest returned to France. Syria would be occupied by British and Commonwealth forces. The Vichy administration would be replaced with a Free French government. The conniving Dentz flew dozens of captured British, Australian, and Indian officers to German-occupied Greece before flying to France, where he remained for the rest of the war. In 1945, he was convicted of treason and sentenced to death. (The sentence was commuted to life imprisonment but he died in prison in December 1945.)

The toughest battle of the Middle East campaign had cost the British/Commonwealth force and the Free French division more than 7,500 dead and wounded, in comparison to about 6,500 Vichy French.

PERSIA

There was one act left in the Middle East drama, this time in Persia. By the summer of 1941, German forces had pushed the Soviets across European Russia, threatening Moscow and the Caucasus, and by extension, Persia.

Both the British and the Soviets were worried about Persia for two reasons. First, hundreds of Axis agents were known to reside in the kingdom. Second, the Allies hoped to open a second supply route through Persia as an alternative to the dangerous Arctic run.

In mid-August, the British and Soviets sent a joint diplomatic communiqué demanding the expulsion of Axis agents (as well as known sympathizers within the Persian military) and permission to use Persia's ports and railroads. When the shah refused their demand, British and Soviet commanders readied to invade.

The British plan called for a two-pronged thrust. The southern prong, led by the 8th Indian Infantry Division, was to cross the Shat al-Arab in two places and take Abadan and Ahwaz while one company was airlifted to the Haft Kel oilfield to the east. Two other companies would land at the port of Bandar Shapur.

In the north, Slim's 10th Indian Infantry Division was to cross the border and take Qasir-i-Shirin and, from there, drive on the Zagros Mountains and Pai Tak Pass, which, once taken, would allow the British to drive on to Kermanshah (about 100 miles east) and the nearby oil facilities and, if necessary, Tehran. The British effort would be made in conjunction with a Russian thrust down from the Caucasus.

Advancing on a two-brigade front, Slim's 10th Indian Infantry Division entered Persia without incident, as most Persian border guards and nearby detachment were still asleep when the invasion began. Upon seeing a British mechanized column advancing toward them, the defenders of Qasir-i-Shirin fled. By the end of the first day, the city was in British hands and the road to Pai Tak Pass was now open. The next day there was a short battle for the village of Gilan. After halting the British advance, Persian troops there withdrew east.

On August 26, Slim deployed his 21st Indian Infantry Brigade before the pass, which scouts indicated was well defended. However, after a flight of Blenheims struck the pass, the Persians there fled as well. Slim advanced down the Zagros Mountains and, after another short skirmish east of Kermanshah, Slim received a Persian delegation with which he negotiated the surrender of the city and oil fields. Both were in British hands by August 30, and the 10th Indian Infantry Division linked up with advancing Soviet troops to the north, at Sinneh, the next day.

ABOVE: An Indian soldier stands guard at a vital oil refinery near Abadan, Iran, September 1941. OPPOSITE: British troops lead a pack-horse train through a rugged mountain pass in Lebanon.

The southern prong, led by the 8th Indian Infantry Division, was directed against the city of Abadan and the vast oilfields there. On the morning of August 24, the 8th Indian Infantry Division jumped off from Basra and crossed the Shat al-Arab into Persia. Advancing on a two-brigade front, the division encountered only light Persian resistance. Elements of the 18th Brigade assaulted the Persian naval barracks up stream at Khorrasmshahr, taking it after a quick firefight.

At the same time, the rest of the brigade pushed into Abadan proper, also against light resistance, though there was a short, sharp battle for the radio station. To the north, the 25th Brigade crossed the Shat al-Arab near Qasr Shaikh where it encountered heavy Persian resistance. The brigade was able to take the village only after a morning's fighting that cost 22 casualties in exchange for 60 Persian dead and 300 prisoners.

A separate effort was made against the oilfield at Haft Kel, in which a company of Baluch Rifles was flown into the interior and landed on the plain of Ahwaz. The Baluch Rifles then advanced on and took the oil field without incident. In the meantime, the other two companies of the Baluch Rifles were landed at the port of Bandar Shapur. First, a fleet of eight Axis-owned merchantmen were dealt with by knife-armed parties who boarded the ships like pirates and seized them before the crews could resist or scuttle. Only one of the merchantmen was lost, and two Persian gunboats were seized as well.

As the small fleet was being captured, the rest of the Baluch Rifles landed at the port and secured it against minor resistance. More than 300 German "tourists" were also captured in the effort. With the first phase of the operation complete, the division made preparations to seize Ahwaz. This was accomplished on August 28 when each brigade advanced north and attempted to encircle the city. Before the envelopment of the city was completed, the Persians in Ahwaz surrendered.

After three days of negotiations in which he agreed to all of the British and Soviet demands, the shah finally capitulated on August 28; the nation was then occupied by British and Soviet forces for the rest of the war. The ports were thrown open to Allied ships and the railway placed at their disposal. The Axis consulates were expelled, as were all German and Italian nationals. On September 17, a joint force marched into Tehran without incident. In December 1943, Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin held their first joint meeting—the Tehran Conference—at the Soviet embassy there.

The spring and summer campaign in the Middle East greatly enhanced the British position there and in the Mediterranean. Remarkably, the campaign was fought by a force patched together from various parts of the empire: a pair of Indian divisions, an Australian division, and various sundry British regiments stationed in Palestine. This ad hoc force removed Axis influence from the region, secured Iraq and Iran, and liberated Syria from Vichy control. They also secured communications between India and the Middle East and opened up a vital supply line to Russia.

Perhaps most important of all, British efforts in the Middle East broke a string of defeats, from the setback against Rommel in the desert to the expulsion from Greece and Crete, an exceptional light before the darkness rising out of the Far East. □

A young Marine remembers his introduction to combat.

BY NICK CARIELLO

COMING OF AGE

IT WAS WITH great anticipation that I sprang up the snowy steps of a Milwaukee building in January 1942 and entered the Marine Corps Recruitment Center. Many enlistees were milling about. I was impressed by a sign in big bloodred letters that hung on a wall: JAP HUNTING LICENSES ISSUED HERE. One big recruit pointed at the sign and snickered, "Yeah, I sure the hell am gonna bag my quota!"

I had actually decided to join the Marines in the temporary recruiting office in Racine, Wisconsin, my hometown, 25 miles away. Before departing for Milwaukee I went with my anxious mother to a notary public office to sign a necessary paper. My mom was reluctant, saying: "Nickie, like I told you, why can't you just wait until the draft?"

Nineteen-year-old U.S. Marine Private Nick Cariello, pictured in San Diego in 1942.

I'm sure she expected and dreaded the firm "No!" that I uttered. So with a deep sigh and tears glistening on her face she slowly signed the paper, saying with anguish, "I just hope I'm not signing your death warrant."

On the train for the tedious journey to San Diego we Marines were clustered in one car. And were we ever excited! The farthest I had ever been from home was Chicago, just 60 miles away.

We smoked and bantered and read tattered magazines and slept curled up in our seats. Three days passed as the train's monotonous clickety-clack lulled us. I was half asleep at early morning when somebody shouted, "Jeez, will you look at that!"

I peered out the window and saw that we had pulled into the San Diego train station. We cheered and stretched. As we leaped off the train we were met by buses that transferred us to the Marine Corps Recruit Depot. The day sped by as we were given inoculations and Marine uniforms and then in assembly-line style were quickly shorn of our long locks.

We were marched to a mess hall where we devoured oversized steaks, assorted vegetables, tons of cold milk, warm bread, and jiggly Jell-o.

Then we were taken to temporary barracks where we talked excitedly despite being exhausted. When it was time for "lights out," I fell asleep when my head met the pillow.

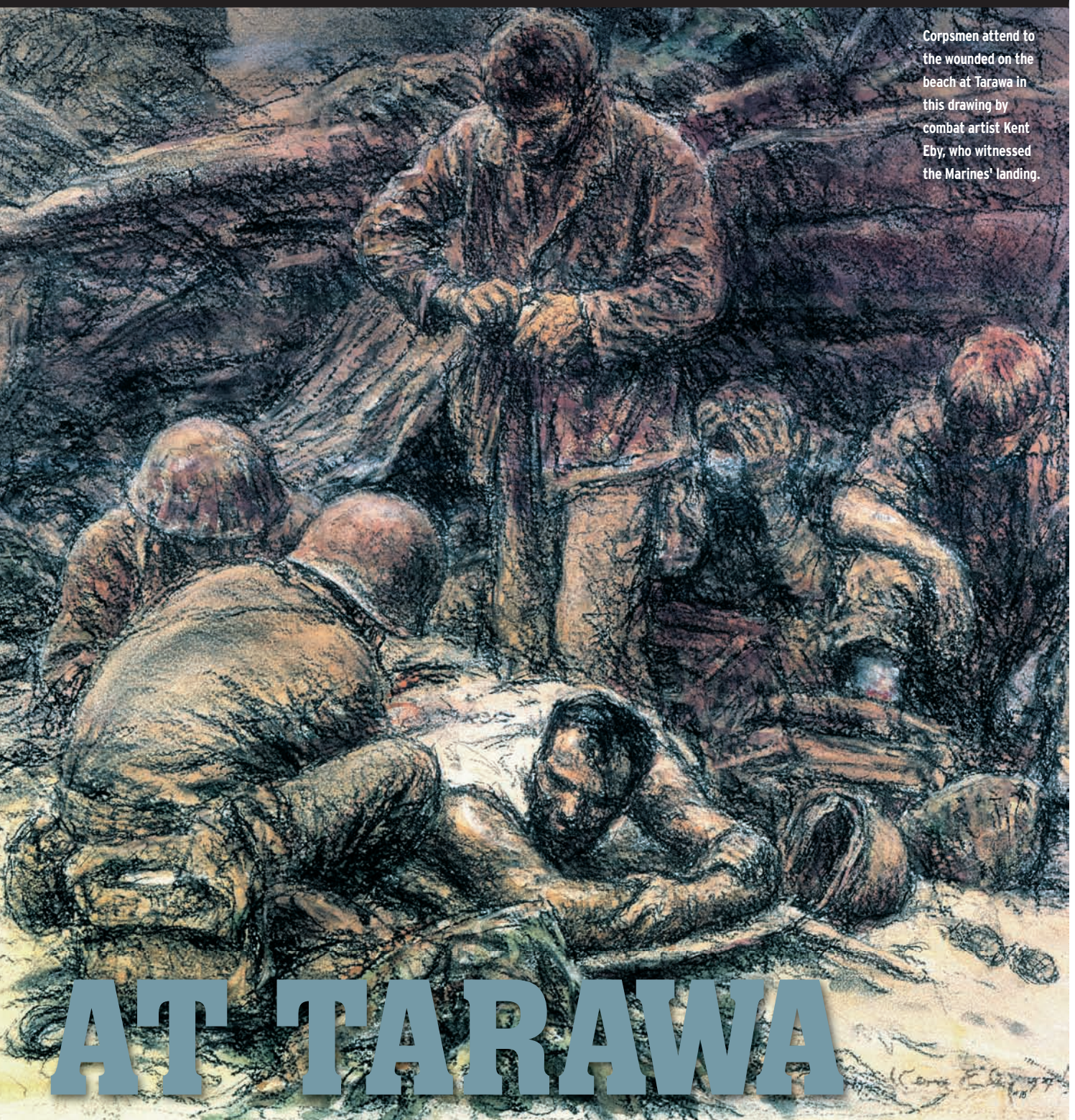
I was shocked out of slumber by a recorded bugle blaring out reveille. Glancing at my watch, I saw it was only 5 AM. "Huh," I moaned and thought, "Are these f**king people crazy or what?" I went back to sleep.

Then a beefy corporal, full of bile and bluster, burst into the room shouting, "Okay, drop your cocks and grab your socks! You have only 20 minutes to do your number one and/or number two and shave your ugly faces! Let's go!"

Sleepily I stumbled out of my lower bunk while the equally sleepy Marine above me jumped down and practically knocked me over.

After a hasty breakfast we learned that we were moving from our comfortable barracks to tents. Each tent housed four Marines. We were told that the tents would be "home, sweet home" until we left boot camp eight weeks later.

U.S. Navy



Corpsmen attend to the wounded on the beach at Tarawa in this drawing by combat artist Kent Eby, who witnessed the Marines' landing.

AT TARAWA

Soon after leaving our tents we met our DIs (drill instructors). One was named Green, he was tall, taciturn, and all business. The other DI, whose name escapes me (I'll call him Black), was much shorter, muscular, and talkative.

Before long we were out on the parade ground getting acquainted with the concrete, learning the fundamentals of being Marines.

As the long days passed, we recruits learned precision parade-ground marching. I found myself enjoying the almost hypnotic snap of the DI's voice when he barked commands such as, "F-o-r-w-a-r-d march! Oblique left, oblique right, to-the-rear march, right turn, left turn, and HALT!"

The outdoor movies on base that we

attended were mostly war films that were blatantly propagandistic. We would boo and stamp our feet whenever the hated Japanese appeared on screen. And occasionally when a romantic film would be screened we would also boo because who the hell wanted mushy-gushy, kissy-face B-movie plots!

On the rifle range we were introduced to what the gunnery officers emphatically described as "our best and only friend"—the '03 Springfield rifle of World War I fame. It was considered most reliable with its smooth bolt action and its magazine containing five cartridges.

I discovered on the first day on the firing range that my eyesight wasn't quite 20/20. I did fine hitting targets at 100 to 150 yards, but beyond that my accuracy fell dramatically.

U.S. Navy

But I did manage to squeak out a Marksman award with the Springfield. Despite knowing that sniper school was not for me, I was still confident I could pop a Japanese soldier at 150 yards.

After eight weeks the long-anticipated graduation day from boot camp arrived, and we had a photo taken of the platoon with drill instructors Green and Black standing in mock sternness among us.

Then Green declared triumphantly: "Listen up! You've lost your girlish laughter and your baby fat. You are now officially Marines!"

We cheered and hollered when informed that we would be blended into the 2nd Marine Division based at Camp Gilbert, 15 miles away.

We had been magically transformed from a gaggle of smart-ass know-it-alls into mean, lean, tough, spunky Marines. And the Marine motto, *Semper Fidelis* (Always Faithful), now seemed seared into our very souls.

At Camp Gilbert we underwent tough training such as descending simulated cargo nets with full gear; practicing on the bayonet range; squirming under live machine-gun fire aimed just above our heads; and stumbling on forced marches of 20 miles.

The scuttlebutt became intense that we would soon leave for the Pacific. Finally the announcement came and the 2nd Marine Regiment of the 2nd Marine Division went aboard vessels accompanied by a large array of warships. Our troopship, along with several others, left early one July morning in 1942.

Several of us stood quietly at the stern of our ship, bewitched by the colorful fluorescent waves churned up by giant propellers. We watched as the varied lights of San Diego slowly began to fade. I pondered what adventures and misadventures lay ahead.

Boredom began to set in after several weeks of sailing. We kept busy cleaning our weapons and hearing lectures about Japanese military tactics as well as Marine philosophy. Finally we were told that we were to land on August 8 on Tulagi in the Solomon Islands. The 1st Marine Division was scheduled to hit the main island of Guadalcanal, where the Japanese had built an airfield, on August 7. We cheered when informed that we would be taking part in the first offensive to roll back the relentless Japanese tide in the vast Pacific.

There was unusual quiet aboard ship the night before our landing on Tulagi. We had heard the 1st Marine Division had met little resistance the day before during its invasion of Guadalcanal, some 25 miles from Tulagi.

Dawn finally arrived and we went over the side of the troopship and down the cargo nets into Higgins boats. The Navy had laid down a fierce barrage prior to our storming the beach. I became extremely apprehensive as I saw the tops of coconut palms sheared off and strewn about like camouflage.

We vaulted from the landing crafts into shallow water as noncoms and officers were yelling above enemy gunfire, "Go, go! Spread out, you stupid s**theads!"

I sprinted ahead and ran faster when I saw a dead, bloody Marine lying twisted on his side in the surf. Reaching shore I heard enemy machine-gun bullets whipping past my legs. My first thought was a silly one: "Hey, those crazy bastards are trying to kill me!" I was most grateful when somebody tossed a hand grenade that silenced that damn machine gun.

After a hectic hour, our sector was cleared and we rested under palm trees and swigged warm water from our canteens. Then we were ordered to the eastern tip of the island where we dug foxholes and boasted about the initial battle. With braggadocio we expressed hope that the few remaining Japanese would counterattack so we could "kick their yellow asses."

Several days of hard fighting later, the island was relatively secure except for a hand-

National Archives

ABOVE: A Marine patrol follows the Tenaru River on the northern coast of Guadalcanal as they search for elusive Japanese artillery pieces. OPPOSITE: Members of the 2nd Marine Division wade ashore in the shallow waters at Tulagi, August 7 or 8, 1942, against no initial Japanese resistance. The enemy would not remain quiet for long.

ful of die-hard Japanese still holding out. Then our company moved to protect an area called Chinese Village. Merchants had migrated there from China years earlier and set up a few ramshackle buildings but were now long gone.

We settled down for the night in our foxholes. Toward dawn we were awakened and shaken by two shots. Nearby a Marine in his foxhole yelled, "Hey, Nick, what the hell was that?"

"Jeez, I don't know, but keep your head down," I said groggily as I grabbed for my rifle. My other hand darted to my upper pocket to make sure my grenade was still there. What had happened turned out to be a severe blow to our morale.

One of our company, a youth from Minnesota whose name was Olmsted, had left his foxhole, apparently to urinate. A Marine standing guard had heard the movement in the dark, panicked, and fired, killing Olmsted.

The next morning we were glum and shaken from the night's traumatic event. As we left the area, the Marine who had killed the "Minnesota Kid" was sitting against a tree. He wore a forlorn look and refused to glance up as we filed by.

I didn't know him very well, but I felt sorry for him. *How do you live with that,* I thought. A jumble of emotions must have been swirling through his mind. A few days later he was transferred to another unit. This was standard practice in case a friend of Olmsted would try to seek revenge.

One night we heard what we called our mail boat chugging toward our harbor. It was a small vessel that plied the waters between Tulagi and Guadalcanal, carrying mail, personnel, and supplies. Suddenly we saw the long finger of the searchlight of a Japanese warship, probably a destroyer, pick up the helpless mail boat. The destroyer fired its guns and the mail boat exploded, sending fiery debris skyward.

To our horror we heard a voice crying from near the flaming wreckage, "Help, oh God, somebody please help me!" But the boat was too far out and there was nothing we could do. The weakened cry for help continued for a few minutes. And then silence.

I vividly recall another night when Japanese warships shelled Tulagi for 30 minutes. We scrunched down into our foxholes, and I was wishing I could crawl into my helmet. I was scared as the shrapnel sang a deadly song over our heads. In the morning we learned that two Marines had been killed.

The next day I was among a small group who volunteered to invade a tiny island near Tulagi; a few runaway Japanese had been spotted there. We piled into a Higgins boat and hit the beach a few minutes later. A patrol was formed to go around the island, skirting the water's edge. We moved out cautiously. Suddenly came the deep, 20-round burping of a Browning Automatic Rifle, which was carried by the Marine who was leading. I was third in line, and as I made my way forward I was shaken to see the recipients of that incredibly loud fire. Inside a shallow cave were the mangled bodies of three Japanese. Gore and guts had been splattered on the sides of the cave and the strong smell of blood wafted toward us.

We completed the circling of the island and then swept across it without further incident. Ironically, we learned later that the Japanese who were killed had apparently thrown away the bolts to their rifles prior to the encounter. This was standard Japanese procedure for preventing any captured weapon from being used by their enemy.

Supplies were slowly arriving, but we were still short of food. Early on we found cans of strange Japanese vegetables. But the strange fare didn't taste bad, given how hungry we were. Also found were bags of buggy Japanese rice. At first we carefully picked out the insects. But it was tedious. So we gave up, saying what the hell, joking that the bugs would give us extra protein.

We made another surprise find inside a shack: Japanese porno magazines! Giggling and shoving, we lined up to peek at the black-and-white drawings. We laughed and stamped our feet in derision at the crude artistry.

After two months on Tulagi, news from Guadalcanal was becoming grim. The

Japanese were landing sizable forces, and frequent battles were occurring. In addition, the Marines were harassed by Japanese naval fire and bombers. In late October we got word that we would be leaving for Guadalcanal to beef up the battered 1st Marine Division. Cheering ourselves hoarse, we tossed our helmets into the air and pounded each other's back. We couldn't wait to get to the big show.

A breeze was blowing the next morning as we left on Higgins boats for Guadalcanal. I looked back at the lush, dark island of Tulagi and realized that it was there I had grown up. I had seen dead Marines and slain Japanese, and those awful scenes were seared into my memory. And although I was still only 19, I felt that now I was a man—and certainly a Marine.

As we approached Guadalcanal we saw many coconut palms strung along the beach, while the rest of the foreboding island looked dark with super-abundant foliage. Black rain-laden clouds dangled over the ominous-looking mountains to the south.

We piled out of the Higgins boats and were greeted by natives with, "You got a ciggie, friend?" I noticed one cheerful middle-aged native with an enormously swollen leg. Later a corpsman told me it was probably the result of the tropical disease elephantiasis.

We moved inland and bivouacked after digging the ever-necessary foxholes, which came in handy that night as the Imperial Japanese Navy bombarded the beach area. It was absolutely paralyzing as the shells screamed in and exploded at nearby Henderson airfield and among the palm trees we were under. We lost two more Marines that night, including a pleasant kid named Gueydan who was from the Missouri Ozarks.

The next several days were rife with scuttlebutt about an upcoming operation. Extra ammunition, water, and food were brought in by trucks that we unloaded like stevedores. Then came word that our outfit, Fox Company, would be in support of several units of the 1st Marine Division in a coastal offensive.

We started out through a coconut plantation; the objective was to confront the enemy near a river called the Matanikau. Our company moved slowly forward despite sniper fire and the thunderous thunk, thunk of enemy mortar shells falling in the area.

The tension was almost unbearable and we made sure we followed the Marine commandment of spreading out." Every nerve in my sweating body seemed strained as I crept forward.

Suddenly enemy artillery shells came slamming in. Somebody yelled "37's!" You could hear them being fired and almost immediately, it seemed, you'd hear the terrifying WHOMP! of the damn shell hitting close by.

I was thankful that nearby was my good friend, Stanley Glowacz, from Nebraska. He was effervescent and extremely articulate with a finely tuned sense of humor. He flashed a pixie grin when I once told him that I admired his fluent BS. (Stanley later was killed during the brutal battle for Tarawa.)

We dove for cover under a log that was propped up by another tree just off the trail. Mosquitoes buzzed my face, and stinging ants covered my hands. I swiped at them while trying to burrow like a badger into the stinking, decaying vegetation.

Rather morbidly, I thought about the $10,000 life insurance policy I had taken out. I had recently written my sister Mary that if something happened to me, she should tell my parents to buy a car and to use the rest of the money to pay off their mortgage.

I shuddered. I sweated. I cursed. I cringed. I prayed in a bargaining mode: "Please save me, God. I'll do good and be a better person. Honest I will!"

Then a shell howled in and struck nearby. A panicked cry rang out: "Corpsman, somebody's been hit! Corpsman, hurry!" A 37mm shell had landed between the outstretched legs of a Marine and had virtually sliced him in two.

About five minutes later, when the shelling began to ease, Stanley Glowacz shouted, "Holy s**t, Nick! Look to the left. Look!"

I turned my head and was simply stunned. Two Marine generals were casually strolling down the narrow trail wearing neat khaki uniforms. The tallest wore a one-star insignia and the other two stars. Both carried swagger sticks and side arms. The shorter general, astonishingly, was smoking a cigar with smoke curling around his head. And there were snipers in the area!

To say that I, one scared 19-year-old kid, was impressed by the calm presence of those generals would not do justice to their audacity. The pair just sauntered along with big

The night before the landing, we sat around cleaning our already spotless weapons. I looked around at the anxious faces of fellow Marines and thought, "Jeez, but we sure are a bunch of young punks."

smiles on their leathered faces as though they were just leaving the country club back home. The tallest one kept repeating in a moderate and reassuring voice, "All right, boys. It's time to move out. Let's go now."

The generals never shouted. They never implored. They didn't curse or raise their voices. The tall one just said quietly over and over, "Time to move out, boys."

The enemy shelling had virtually stopped when a noncom bellowed: "Okay, you friggin' pansies. Let's move. Double time!" But it was the incredible example of bravery under fire of those taciturn generals that ignited the courage we needed. Along with others, I leaped up and advanced, dodging and throwing myself on the ground and repeating the process.

We cleaned out several Japanese positions and even found an abandoned 37mm

National Archives

A group of Marines takes a break near a captured Japanese communications post on steamy, disease-ridden Guadalcanal. By the time this photo was taken on February 8, 1943, Nick Cariello's unit, the 2nd Regiment of the 2nd Marine Division, had left for R&R in New Zealand.

artillery piece. Some Marines stopped and gleefully urinated on the hated weapon. I came upon the body of a Japanese officer with the side of his head ripped off. I hurriedly searched his pack and found a tiny Japanese flag. But the real find was a small black box that contained a pair of intricately carved ivory chopsticks. I quickly stuffed the "spoils of war" into my own pack.

The drive soon ended when we determined that the Japanese had retreated. Our company was pulled back to protect the eastern approaches of our invaluable stronghold at Henderson air field. Thankfully, it was a relatively quiet front and we were able to relax.

We also thoroughly hashed over the remarkable incident of those generals who inspired us and whom we never saw again. In that particular fog of battle, we never did find out who they were. Were they from our 2nd Marine Division or from the 1st Marines? General staff members or visiting dignitaries or what?

After a few days we were moved to an active sector. It seemed to rain almost every day now. The sticky mud tugged at our boots with a soft sucking sound. Adding to our misery was the ever-present multitude of insects that would haunt your ears, invade your nose, and crawl down the neck of your ever-damp fatigues.

And especially bothersome were those damn big mosquitoes! At times they seemed the size of hummingbirds. Once I watched with fascination as a huge mosquito perched on my arm and drilled its proboscis into my skin. It leisurely took its fill and floated off bloated with my blood. I said something silly like, "Dinner's on me, pal."

Our company began patrols that were uneventful until one morning when we were ambushed. We were crossing a jungled ridge when enemy gunfire raked us. Casualties were numerous, including a machine-gunner named Jack who was killed trying to set up his weapon.

One Marine, "Pop" Suttles from Arkansas, crawled up a rise and was looking down in a half-crouched position. I was just below him and heard a thud. Suttles fell back with a bullet in his chest. I yelled for a corpsman, who yelled back, "Bring him down!" Suttles was moaning as I and another Marine pulled him off the ridge. But he died. Then I crawled up the ridge and threw a grenade into the valley. It boomed and I heard excited Japanese voices. Maybe I got lucky, I thought.

We picked up our dead and wounded and fought our way out of danger back to our safe sector.

What a 10-carat hellhole Guadalcanal turned out to be with its oppressive climate. Diseases such as dysentery, jungle rot, and malaria, along with inadequate nutrition, had weakened us. Misery and melancholy were twin emotions prevalent in that accursed jungle environment, which was infested with stubborn, loyal-to-the-death Japanese.

Then finally, in January, we heard that

National Archives

ABOVE: While Betio, the principal island of the Tarawa Atoll (background), takes a pounding from naval gunfire, landing craft circle in anticipation of the order to "Land the landing force," November 20, 1943. OPPOSITE: U.S. Marines, taking cover behind the low sea wall on Tarawa, watch as an amtrac advances toward an enemy position.

the 1st Marine Division was leaving for Australia. The U.S. Army was starting to come. And before long an Army unit took over our duties as the Japanese were near defeat.

We departed for New Zealand for rest and rehabilitation on January 31, 1943. We were a tattered and battered bunch that boarded ship. Many of us were underweight and overtired. Some were dispirited, but most of us still maintained a cocky esprit de corps attitude.

And we were fervently hoping the girls in New Zealand would be cute and cooperative. And they were.

Soon the morale soared in our camp as we fattened up on mutton and milk, stews and steaks, fish and fruit. Morale was given an added boost when Artie Shaw and his swing band came in for a visit and played popular tunes such as "Begin the Beguine." We simply went bonkers and danced wildly in the aisles with each other.

Booze and beer were available in Wellington. We went to dance halls and bars and were welcomed into the homes of New Zealanders who were grateful for us saving them from the Japanese. Romances flourished with the local girls, and even wedding bells clanged for some Marines.

We knew things were about to get really serious again when we were issued the new (to us, anyway) M-1 Garand rifles, which were semiautomatic and held an eight-round clip. For months we trained in amphibious landings on the beaches. In November 1943, after eight months in New Zealand, the division was plumped out with replacements and about 20,000 strong.

Finally, with much excitement, we boarded ships. After several days of sailing we were told of our mission. It would be the taking of a Japanese airfield in the Tarawa atoll in the central Pacific.

The main objective within the Tarawa atoll was an island called Betio. It contained the airfield with its bomber strip. Its capture was critical because Japanese aircraft based on Betio were a threat to Allied shipping from Hawaii to Australia and New Zealand.

Betio is surrounded by a treacherous coral reef and is only about 2.5 miles long and 800 yards across at its widest. Its highest elevation was just 10 feet. According to Marine historians, this little speck of sand was said to be the most heavily defended ever invaded by Allied forces in the Pacific. Japanese Rear Admiral Meichi Shibasaki, commander on the island, boasted to his 4,800 troops that a "million Americans couldn't take Tarawa in a hundred years."

Fortifications were awesome. Steel and concrete barriers, along with minefields and extensive strings of barbed wire, protected the three beaches selected for landing. Nearly 500 pillboxes were scattered over the island. Also present were fearsome 8-inch guns mounted on turrets. In addition, there were anti-aircraft and anti-boat weapons along with howitzers. Machine guns were seemingly implanted everywhere, along with scores of mortars.

The night before the landing, we sat around cleaning our already spotless weapons. I looked around at the anxious faces of fellow Marines and thought, "Jeez, but we sure are a bunch of young punks."

Bravado filled the air. We joked and smoked and heckled and sweated on deck and in the holds. One Marine, known as "Big Red from Alabama," wondered in his southern accent "if there were any gals on the island and would they be horny and cooperative."

We laughed, punched the air with enthusiasm and yelled, "Yes! Yes!"

Then a Marine stood up and started singing a ribald song many of us knew. Then somebody began singing the Marine Hymn, and we all chimed in with enthusiasm if not talent. At the finish we cheered and hollered for a long time. Sure, we were Marines, but I noticed many a moist eye.

About 3 AM on November 20, 1943, came the call to prepare for debarkation. We gathered our weapons and shook sweaty hands all around. Then we did what infantrymen have done for centuries: we nervously waited and waited—and then waited some more. I admitted to myself that I was scared, really scared. Then I thought, "Hey, that's good. I'll be more alert."

Finally we were told to go over the ship's side, and we made the dangerous descent down the cargo nets and dropped into the bobbing amtracs (amphibious tractors). They were slow but capable of moving ashore through rough surf.

I made my way forward to one of two .50-caliber machine guns aboard our amtrac. Though I was a young PFC, my squad leader had chosen me for that position, and I was most proud and knew others were envious. I checked the weapon, which had already been loaded. Its new paint reflected dully and menacingly. Stroking the gun fondly, I said something inane like: "Don't let me down, pal."

As the amtracs chugged along, the battleships *Colorado* and *Maryland* fired their massive 16-inch guns. We cheered when we saw the red-hot shells howling toward shore. Monstrous fireballs erupted on Betio, perhaps indicating that an ammunition dump had been hit. Plumes of black smoke enveloped the beaches as air attacks began. The incredible noise started to mount.

National Archives

I looked in disbelief at the havoc being created by the naval pounding and air strikes. I vividly recall becoming extremely apprehensive and I felt my heart ratcheting up. Looking out at the armada, I felt like an ever-so-tiny cog plugged into a vast killing machine. I then glanced at my fellow machine-gunner across the amtrac, who had a grim look on his young and unshaven face. But he smiled, flashed me the victory sign, and quickly turned back to his own business.

Time seemed fractured as we circled for what seemed a minor eternity. The blue-green ocean glistened and oppressive heat began rising from the deep waves. Finally the order came to head for the island; our vehicle was in the first wave. As the amtracs chugged toward shore, my mouth felt like I was chewing on cotton. I took a big swallow from my canteen, but it didn't help.

We were perhaps 50 yards from shore when the overwhelming sound of battle increased in intensity. It was piercing beyond belief. The terrifying crescendo was almost paralyzing. I thought my eardrums would crack.

The din came from a slew of Navy dive-bombers spreading their deadly eggs across the smoking island. Fighter craft relentlessly strafed the beaches. Warships added to the deafening cacophony as they belched salvo after salvo inland and along the battered beaches. The pizzicato humming of enemy machine guns, large and small, was almost continuous. Huge splintered palm trees were splayed against the vivid blue sky. Heavy smoke and dust swirled, making it difficult to see.

Then I noticed an incredible sight to my left. A intrepid destroyer had slipped in close to our landing site, with its propellers furiously churning to keep from grounding. Its 5-inch guns pounded the shore in our support. Two sailors, one sitting and another standing, raked a gun emplacement with automatic rifles,

I began firing the .50-caliber. It coughed heavily and danced erratically in my sweating hands, making it difficult to control as the amtrac bounced crazily in the surf. But I managed to fire along the shoreline as we closed in.

It was then that I saw them. Eight or so enemy soldiers in brown uniforms were dashing ghostlike through drifting smoke toward a large bunker. I swung my weapon around, took careful aim, and pulled the trigger. But nothing happened.

"Damn it!" I shouted. The gun had jammed. Hurriedly I tried to unjam the weapon but couldn't. "You lousy piece of s**t," I yelled in anger as I struck it sharply with my palm. Then I realized I was wasting time. I grabbed my rifle and snapped off three shots before the Japanese disappeared through the smoke into the bunker. I might have wounded or killed several,

but who knows?

Suddenly our platoon leader, Randy Johnson, a fearless guy from Minnesota, yelled, "Everybody down! Get your frigging asses down!" We obeyed instantly as heavy enemy fire was zipping all around the amtrac. Finally the vehicle crunched onto the sand and wheezed a few yards inland.

"Everybody out, now!" Johnson screamed. We tumbled over the side and landed on wet sand with Johnson shouting, "Damn it, spread out and move forward. Go, go!"

I lurched forward through the sticky sand, weighed down by two grenades, two canteens, my ammo belt, an entrenching tool, a three-pound helmet, a pack containing assorted paraphernalia, and my 9.5-pound rifle. I wished I were wearing a thick suit of armor instead of flimsy fatigues.

National Archives

Moving ahead with several others, we found a big shell hole about 20 yards inland. We hunched down at its bottom, mindful of enemy machine-gun bullets whining overhead. Finally it stopped. I raised my head and considered throwing a grenade at the machine gun that I had spotted behind a log. I had played football in high school and had a good arm. But the distance was just too great. So I furiously fired my rifle at the emplacement. Two other Marines joined me, and one had a BAR. He set up the weapon, and the burp-burp-burp of the Browning with its 20-round clip was reassuring, though deafening.

Then we heard a faint yelp. The operator of the Browning asked, "Hey, you think we got any?" I answered, "Yeah, I believe so. Maybe they'll stay low for a while."

Smoke from our gunfire drifted over our shell hole. Since there was no return fire we figured we either got lucky or the machine-gun crew had moved farther inland.

I had never known fear like I was now experiencing. It penetrated the marrow of my bones. I noticed I was breathing shallowly, so I forced myself to take deep measured breaths. There was a constant metallic taste in my mouth that I found most strange. Fear never left me. I noticed that my muscles were tight and that I was exhausted. It was impossible to relax in the saunalike heat that drained my energy; Tarawa is only 80 miles north of the equator.

My lips were starting to split and my face felt sunburned. I was soaked and sticky, as sweat had gathered in my armpits and then slid down my chest and legs. I felt like I was a tightly wound toy, ready to do anything and everything.

Suddenly a mortar shell whistled in and hit the top of our shell hole a few feet away. We ducked and cringed and cursed and prayed, but nothing happened. It was a dud. We were still shaken when we decided it was time to move out, so we dashed out of the hole and ran forward. Then that damn machine gun came alive and I could hear bullets chip-chip-chip-chipping the sand perilously close to my feet.

Then I did something dangerous, and perhaps foolish, but it probably saved my life. I saw a small opening into what apparently was an enemy dugout, and I dove into it without hesitation. It was neatly carved out of the earth. Empty food cans were strewn about and the odor of strange food permeated the area. Luckily, no enemy was present or I could have died there.

As I left the dugout I saw that I had been separated from the others, so I sprinted forward. I saw another large shell crater and fell into it. Four Marines were there, none of whom I recognized, but apparently they knew each other. One was a sergeant who had suffered a groin wound. A makeshift bandage covered his injury and he moaned as his bloody hands kept opening and closing around the wound.

We conferred and agreed that the sergeant needed immediate medical attention. Our location was perhaps 40 yards from the beach; two Marines volunteered to run for a stretcher.

Dusk was near as we anxiously awaited the return of those Marines. The wounded sergeant continued to moan. We could hear the unrelenting gunfire on all sides.

Finally the two soaked-with-sweat Marines returned. We carefully loaded the now-quiet sergeant onto the stretcher. One Marine said softly, "Let's go," and we quickly

National Archives

ABOVE: Two Marines help a wounded buddy to a place of safety during the fierce fighting on Tarawa. Nearly 1,000 Marines were killed in the three-day battle and over 2,000 were wounded. The enemy force fared far worse. OPPOSITE: Fear is etched on the face of a Marine (foreground) while a machine-gun team pours fire into the enemy from the rubble of a destroyed Japanese position.

moved out. There had been gunfire, but now it seemed strangely quiet.

It was nearly dark. Cautiously we moved toward the beach, expecting sniper fire, but none came. I had the wishful thought that perhaps the snipers were withholding their fire because of our mission of mercy. Not likely, I concluded, but you never know.

As we neared the beach, other Marines in the area appeared almost as shadows. Suddenly there was a stunning blast and I felt like I had been swung up by a giant hand and then slammed hard to the ground. I remember wondering what the hell was I doing on my back. I managed to roll over. My legs felt like they had been seared with a blowtorch, and they burned with almost unbearable pain caused by jagged fragments from an enemy grenade. Many pieces had torn deeply into my buttocks and upper thighs.

Many cries for "Corpsman!" rang out, and mine was among them, shouting, "My legs, my legs, are they gone?" I was sure I was dying. A profusion of confusion erupted and there were excited cries of, "Get that Jap bastard! Will somebody get that bastard?"

Those of us who had carried that stretcher believed other Marines might have thought we were enemies because it was near dark. I yelled, "Hey, for Christ's sake, we're Marines! We're Marines!"

Others joined my frantic plea. Then I spotted the silhouette of a Marine who yelled back, "Damn it, guys! I know it! I know it!" He pulled the pin from a grenade and tossed it into a spider hole. There was a muffled explosion and he shouted in triumph: "Yes! I got 'em! I got 'em!"

Stretcher bearers magically appeared out of the dark. Gentle hands loaded me onto a stretcher while a corpsman skillfully gave me a shot of morphine. The awful pain lessened. As I was being carried to a first-aid station on the beach, I thought I recognized the voice of one of the stretcher bearers. I said, "Hey, Tim, is that you?"

He said, "Yes, and who are you?" I told him and he said tearfully, "Oh, my God, the men from Fox Company I've picked up today!"

We reached the first aid station and I was taken off the stretcher. Two figures loomed above, one holding a tiny flashlight. The one with the flashlight hurriedly examined me and then I heard him say the sweetest four words I've ever heard: "There's no hemorrhaging, doctor."

Morning came and I was still in a slight morphine daze, but I saw Marine reinforcements wading waist-deep through the shallow bay. They were easy targets for eager Japanese gunners, and dozens upon dozens of struggling Marines died. Some were half submerged and looked like big rag dolls. Bodies began piling up in twos and threes, and they looked like driftwood. (I found out later that their Higgins boats had hung up on the treacherous coral reef because the tide had been incorrectly calculated by planners of the campaign.)

At midmorning I was placed on a stretcher and taken to a long wooden bridge. On the way I saw unbelievable chaos and carnage. Marine and Japanese dead, some tangled together, were everywhere. The stench was horrific. Bloated bodies floated by with some face up, others face down. There were several knocked-out Marine tanks along with many disabled amtracs. Japanese gun emplacements were shattered and smoking.

At the pier my stretcher was placed on a rubber raft containing several other wounded. The raft was pushed along the pier by Marines and corpsmen. The pier stretched about 1,000 feet out into the lagoon. We quickly ran into sniper fire from Japanese holed up in disabled amtracs. Several Marines were reinjured and had to be taken to the shelter of the pier. Other Marines went ahead and cleaned out the snipers.

At the end of the pier I was transferred to a Higgins boat to be taken to a troopship for medical attention. The corpsman aboard the craft asked if I wanted morphine. I was still in a half daze but was able to shake my head no. I've often thought that additional morphine at that time might have killed me.

I vaguely remember being winched aboard the troopship and being swung through the air on my stretcher like a giant pendulum. I saw cruisers and battleships

circling warily. Destroyers patrolled around ponderous aircraft carriers as they sniffed for enemy subs.

As I was being lowered to the deck I heard voices shouting directions, and then I felt eager hands lifting my stretcher. The hands gently carried me across the hot deck and down a hatch. Near a bulkhead lay three lifeless forms, each wrapped in American flags. Our company had been in the first wave and suffered heavy losses. I wondered if I knew any of those flag-draped dead.

Then I heard a commanding voice say, "Bring him in!" I was put down onto a table inside an emergency room. My clothes were cut off and in the process a grenade fell out of my pocket and rolled across the floor. Panic ensued with medical personnel screaming: "Grenade! Holy s**t, a grenade!"

National Archives

I managed to mumble, "No, no, it's Okay, it's Okay! It's harmless until the pin is pulled."

Nervous laughter broke out and the tension broke as the doctor and corpsmen teased and called each other "wimps." Then I was turned over onto my stomach and the doctor quickly went to work on my legs. I heard a steady plink, plink, plink, plink as pieces of grenade were dropped into a metal tray. Almost musical, I thought with black humor. Yeah, some music.

Finally it was over and I was taken down into the lower depths of the ship, along with other wounded. Conditions were dreadful. The area stank with the strong smell of sweat, unwashed bodies, and antiseptics. And it was hot.

Groans from the wounded resonated as I was placed in a lower bunk. I recognized one of the injured nearby. His name was Joey and was a member of my company. Joey wore a cast on his right arm and told me emotionally that he had lost a testicle. He was worried about Archie and Tom, his two brothers. The three had enlisted together in Reno and had made it through the Tulagi and Guadalcanal campaigns unscathed.

"Did you see 'em, Nick?" he asked anxiously. I said, "Sorry, Joey, but I saw neither." (We learned later that both his brothers survived.)

Then with elation we heard the welcome news that the savage Tarawa engagement was finished after "the issue being in doubt" during the early hours. For three horrendous days the ferocious Japanese fighters fought valiantly and just wouldn't quit. They had to be bombed, blasted, and burned out of their formidable strongholds and improvised burrows. We also learned that a considerable portion of our losses had resulted from Higgins boats getting snagged on that damnable reef because of those those fatal tide miscalculations. Bitter lessons were learned and applied to future Marine and Army landings, which were credited with saving numerous lives.

Probably most Americans today never heard about Tarawa. If asked, they might think it's a popular rap group or a new Japanese car model. They probably would be surprised to learn that in just three days of stunning savagery, 997 Marines were killed and 2,233 wounded. Another 88 Marines went missing and are presumed dead. Also killed were 30 sailors, while another 59 were wounded. Total American casualties: 3,407. The Japanese lost a lot more. Out of Admiral Shibasaki's 4,800 troops, only 17 survived and he wasn't one of them.

Everyone settled in for the long journey to Hawaii. Overworked medical people managed to keep us sedated and quiet with morphine, the drug of the day. You wanted it? You asked for it and it was quickly obtained; I was among many requesting the precious painkiller.

After several grueling weeks at sea we reached Pearl Harbor on December 5. What a fantastic experience it was to be winched out of the ship's innards on a stretcher and onto the main deck! I saw swaying palm trees framed against a turquoise sky. It was pleasantly warm. A mild breeze with the strong scent of salt blew in from the ocean and drifted over me. I savored the very smell of fresh air after the oppressive weeks in those fetid ship's quarters. The sun bathed my eager upturned face as tears appeared on my cheeks.

National Archives

ABOVE: Navy medical personnel aboard a ship gently handle a casualty from the fighting on Tarawa. The wounded will soon be bound for naval hospitals in Hawaii and then California. OPPOSITE: While a rifle is used to hang a bottle of plasma, a wounded Marine receives medical care on the sands of Tarawa.

We were transported by ambulance to the hospital. Before long we were into the routine of meals, changing bandages, playing poker, trading exaggerated tales, and penning letters home. One evening when I was feeling wretched and possibly depressed, I routinely requested morphine from the naval nurse on duty. She looked at me intently after inspecting my medical record. Then she said with authority, "No! You don't need it."

"What?" I complained. "Come on, now! I do need it. I really do!"

But once again she firmly said, "No, I keep telling you. You don't need it and you're not getting any. So forget about it and go to sleep."

With a determined step the nurse left, leaving me speechless. Then came the sobering realization that she was perfectly right. I, like many others, was becoming addicted to the damn stuff.

I apologized to the nurse the next day. She smiled, patted my arm, and said sympathetically, "That's okay, son, I understand. And don't think you're the only one." From then on, despite occasional sweats, the only painkiller I requested was aspirin.

The following day came marvelous news. We were to be taken aboard the *Solace,* a hospital ship. Additional good news: we were scheduled to arrive in San Diego two days before Christmas!

The trip back home was without incident. When we reached the dock there were gray-clad women welcoming the wounded being unloaded. As my stretcher was being carried down the gangplank, all the women were smiling and cheerful. Except one. She was middle-aged and stared at me with almost a frown as I was carried by. I wondered: did I remind her of someone, maybe her son who perhaps had been killed in action and what business did I have being alive though seriously wounded and why me and not him? The incident still haunts me.

At the naval hospital in San Diego I was assigned to a room with five other Marines. One was a young boy, perhaps 18, whose right eye had been lost in combat. Every day near dusk one of the nurses would sit beside him and offer comforting words. The boy had told the nurses that he was afraid of losing his other eye to disease or accident. He was troubled by the dark. Occasionally, during the long nights, he could be heard sobbing. Then he was transferred to a special ward for the blind.

More surgery was performed to remove even more shrapnel from my shredded legs. I was encouraged to walk with crutches, and rehabilitation went smoothly. Soon I was able to cast aside the crutches as I healed rapidly. In late January I was overjoyed to learn I would be given a 30-day medical leave, and I happily left for the long train journey back to my hometown.

The reunion with my joyful family was memorable and marked by repeated kisses and an abundance of tears, cheers, and backslaps. My mother had concocted one of her incomparable spaghetti meals with spicy sausages and mouthwatering meatballs. This entrée was followed by chicken cacciatore. Bottles of robust red wine were shared. Zesty cheeses and a cornucopia of fresh fruit appeared magically. Italian liqueurs such as anisette graced the heavily laden table. The long-awaited night melted into early morning and was filled with joy, love, the telling of much-repeated stories, and the recounting of treasured memories of our great family life.

A month later I returned to the hospital, where I was discharged, and then assigned guard duty at the Marine base in San Diego. Several months later I was sent to a naval ammunition production base in Hastings, Nebraska. A contingent of Marines patrolled the huge base in Jeeps. (Tough duty, eh?) In late summer of 1944, I was sent to a naval air base in Corpus Christi, Texas, where again I was assigned to guard duty. Then on February 16, 1945, I was given a medical discharge and returned home.

I am now on the downward arc of my life, and over the decades I've occasionally wondered why I survived and so many others died. Some people might credit God; others might suggest serendipity or a guardian angel perched constantly on my shoulder. Still others might contend it was "peculiar circumstances" or just plain "dumb luck." I'm baffled and am not

Continued on page 96

From the VISTULA TO THE ODER

The massive Soviet Winter Offensive of 1945 spelled doom for the German forces on the Eastern Front.

BY HENRIK LUNDE

The Situation in the East, Summer 1944

The area between the Baltic Sea and the Carpathian Mountains had been relatively quiet since the end of Operation Bagration late in the summer of 1944. In early January 1945 we find the Soviet armies positioned along the Vistula River to its great bend and then north along the Narew River. Stalin's armies held several bridgeheads across each—at Serock and Rozan on the Narew and at Pulawy, Magnuszev, and Baranow on the Vistula.

The Soviets had an extremely impressive array of forces confronting the Germans. The 2nd and 3rd Belorussian Fronts (Army Groups) in the north, with 12 armies, faced Army Group Center's three armies. Their superiority was even more ominous on the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian Fronts opposite Army Group A. There the Soviets had 2,200,000 troops, 6,400 tanks and self-propelled assault guns, and 46,000 indirect-fire weapons. Against these two fronts Army Group A's Seventeenth, 4th Panzer, and Ninth Armies could muster "only" 400,000 troops, 1,150 tanks, and 4,100 indirect-fire weapons.

Operation Bagration, the Soviets' 1944 summer offensive, had suffered logistically in its closing days, but they intended to avoid a similar situation in their next offensive. By January they had completed the most massive logistical buildup of the war. The two fronts—1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian—received 132,000 carloads of supplies. That was more than received by all four fronts before Bagration. Nine million rounds were made available to the two fronts as an initial issue along with 30 million gallons of gasoline and diesel fuel.

In December 1944, the Eastern Intelligence Branch of OKH (German Army High Command) issued a worrying estimate of Soviet intentions and capabilities. It concluded that the main Soviet effort would be delivered against Army Group A by the 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian Fronts. In an important revision in January 1945, the OKH concluded that the expected offensive against Army Group Center had the lower Vistula area as its objective, while the drive against Army Group A could go as far as Berlin. The OKH expected the offensive to begin in the middle of January.

General Heinz Guderian, the OKH chief of staff, was very uneasy about the situation in the east. He visited Hitler at the Adlerhorst (temporary Führer headquarters in the Taunus Mountains) on Christmas Eve 1944 to plead for a change in strategy. Guderian wanted Hitler to call off the Ardennes offensive and move all forces that could be spared to the Eastern Front.

In a Soviet propaganda painting from 1945, Soviet tanks and rocket launchers are shown launching their winter offensive against the German invaders.

akg-images

Guderian's pleas were in vain. Hitler called the estimated buildup of Soviet forces in the east "a gigantic bluff" and refused to cancel Operation Wacht-am-Rhein—the planned thrust in the west. He also refused to bring units in from Norway or from the Courland pocket.

Guderian had good reasons to feel gloomy. He was particularly concerned about Army Group A, commanded by General Joseph Harpe. Since the transfer of the Ninth Army to this group in November 1944, it occupied a long front—from the northern border of Hungary to the confluence of the Vistula and Narew. This long front was defended, from south to north, by Group Heinrici (two armies) and the Seventeenth, 4th Panzer, and the Ninth Armies. It was a thinly held front, amounting to little more than a string of strongpoints with hardly any depth.

Guderian visited the Eastern Front in early January. Army Group A's briefing in Krakow on January 8 was pessimistic—but realistic. It expected the Soviets to cover the distance from the Vistula to Silesia in six

days. Guderian tentatively approved a plan involving an adjustment of the front around the Baranow bridgehead that would have shortened the line and made units available as reserves.

Army Group Center, under General Georg-Hans Reinhardt, was responsible for covering the approaches to East Prussia and Danzig. At the beginning of December 1944, this army group was in better shape than all others. Its three armies—3rd Panzer, 4th, and 2nd—had 33 infantry divisions and 12 panzer or Panzergrenadier divisions to defend a 575-kilometer front. But this situation changed radically by the end of the year. Five panzer divisions and two cavalry brigades had been stripped away for transfer to other fronts, and another panzer division was taken away in early January.

Reinhardt proposed to Guderian that Army Group Center be allowed to withdraw from its exposed position on the Narew to the East Prussian border. This would have significantly shortened its front and made reserves available. Although Guderian agreed, he could not make such a major change without Hitler's approval. And Hitler almost never approved withdrawals.

An apprehensive Guderian reported to Hitler back at the Adlerhorst on January 9. His main purposes were to seek approval for the proposal made by Army Group Center to withdraw and to argue for reinforcements from the west to go to Army Groups A and Center rather than to Hungary to protect the oil fields. Hitler refused all of Guderian's requests and recommendations, including the adjustment Guderian had approved for Army Group A.

Soviet Plans

While Guderian and OKH were deeply worried about the future, the Soviets were full of confidence and optimism. The plans of Soviet High Command (STAVKA) amounted to a quick operation to end the war. It was a two-phase plan. The first phase, expected to last 15 days, involved a drive to the Oder and lower Vistula. The main drive would be executed by the 1st Belorussian Front, under Marshal Georgi K. Zhukov, and the 1st Ukrainian Front, under Marshal Ivan S. Konev, out of their bridgeheads on the Vistula.

Konev's 1st Ukrainian Front was to break out of the Baranow bridgehead and head west to Radomsko. Its right flank units were to assist Zhukov's 1st Belorussian Front in destroying the Germans in the area between Radom and Kielce. The drive would continue to Krakow and the industrial region of Upper Silesia before ending along the Oder River.

The 1st Belorussian Front was to break out of the Pulawy and Magnuszev bridgeheads. The front's right flank would encircle Warsaw while the main force would continue toward the city of Lodz in the south and Kutno west of Warsaw on the road to Poznan. The drive was to continue via Poznan to the Oder in the vicinity of Kuestrin and Frankfurt-an-der-Oder.

The 2nd Belorussian Front, under General Konstantin Rokossovsky, was to break out of the Serock and Rozan bridgeheads on the Narew north of the Vistula bend. Its mission was to drive northwest to the Baltic and clear the lower Vistula area.

ABOVE LEFT: General Konstantin Rokossovsky and his 2nd Belorussian Front would sweep German armies from the lower Vistula area. ABOVE RIGHT: Gotthard Heinrici, German defensive specialist, could not stem the Red tide. TOP LEFT: Marshal Ivan S. Konev commanded a million men in the 1st Ukrainian Front. TOP RIGHT: Heinz Guderian, OKH chief of staff, tried to warn Hitler of the impending offensive.

At the same time, General Ivan Chernyakhovsky's 3rd Belorussian Front was to drive west from its positions east of the Masurian Lakes toward Königsberg. It was hoped that it would be able to encircle the Fourth German Army in the lake area.

The Soviet plan did not call for a pause along the Oder. They expected that the German defenses would have crumbled and their armies shattered in the initial phase. The 1st Belorussian and 1st Ukrainian Fronts were to continue the drive to Berlin and then to the Elbe River (possibly even the Rhine). This part of the operation was expected to take about 30 days.

The State of the Wehrmacht

Some observers have pointed out that things looked better for the Germans at the beginning of 1945 than they had in September 1944. The Soviets had not made any substantial gains north of the Carpathians. Army Group South had almost regained its balance after being virtually destroyed in August 1944. The Germans were close to completing their withdrawals from Greece and Albania, and the Western Allies were stopped at the Gothic Line in Italy. The Ardennes offensive had not succeeded in its strategic objective, but it had upset the Allied schedule and delayed their advance into the heart of Germany.

These improvements, however, were illusions. The German ability to hold its fronts had been on a downward spiral, and in the next few months that spiral would spin out of control. The first element in this spiral was the lack of trained manpower to keep the space/force ratio from worsening.

By October 1944 German strength on the Eastern Front had fallen to less than 1,800,000 men; about 150,000 of these were Russian auxiliaries. This was a drop in strength of about 400,000 since June 1944.

The replacements arriving in the period from September 1 to December 31, 1944,

ullstein bild

Judging by their expressions, Hitler and his men still exuded confidence when he visited the Oder front in March 1945. The Führer's faulty tactical decisions would doom his army on the Eastern Front.

went primarily to create new units. This resulted in an illusory increase in units but a glaring discrepancy between authorized strength and present for duty strength in existing formations. The Germans "fixed" part of this problem by simply reducing the 1944 table of organization by 700,000 spaces. The fact that a cumulative shortfall of 800,000 unfilled spaces still existed after the change to the table of organization is a telling illustration of the manpower problem.

This self-delusion was carried to great lengths. Artillery units of brigade size were designated "corps," and groupings of one or two battalions of armor and infantry were designated "brigades."

In the months following Operation Bagration, a number of unorthodox measures were taken to cope with the falling strength. Nazi Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels was ordered to come up with a million men through the Nazi Party machinery. By the end of the year he had achieved 50 percent of that goal through new recruits and interservice transfers. In October 1944 Hitler activated the home guard (*Volkssturm*), composed of men between ages 16 and 60 who were otherwise exempt from the draft. About 200,000 men from military schools and training centers were organized into Gneisenau and Blücher battle groups.

The number of replacements between August and December 1944 was slightly larger (1,569,000) than the losses sustained by the Army (1,457,000) for the period June-November. What these units had in common was poor training, poor leadership, and inadequate numbers.

The Germans were also suffering in the matériel field. Although production of fighter aircraft, tanks, and assault guns reached new heights in late 1944, that output could not be sustained because of the heavy bombing of the Ruhr. What was even more alarming was the fact that the Western Allies were closing in on the Ruhr, and the Soviets would soon overrun Upper Silesia, where many production plants had been moved to avoid the strategic bombing.

The most glaring deficiency was in oil where there had been a catastrophic decline. Despite great efforts to develop more synthetic oil facilities, output had fallen. The Romanian and Latvian oil fields were lost and the hold on the Hungarian fields was tenuous.

Hitler continued his insistence on not making withdrawals and holding so-called fortified places bypassed by the Soviets. Although holding some communications centers made military sense because they complicated Soviet supply operations, tens of thousands of troops were sacrificed in trying to hold places that had little tactical or strategic significance.

During the offensive, Army Group North and Army Group Center were isolated—one in Courland and the other in East Prussia. Though some units were evacuated, those that remained encircled represented a terrible waste of manpower at a time when those hundreds of thousands of troops were needed farther west.

Army Group and Army headquarters had become little more than mechanical instruments for transmitting the Führer's will. This alarming tendency had begun much earlier and represented a great change from 1939-1940.

German leaders were taught to expect the unexpected on the battlefield and instructed to deviate from plans in order to achieve their goals. Leaders were expected to make quick decisions and equally quick executions. It was a cornerstone of German military doctrine. Part of that doctrine was that higher German echelons kept their intervention in operations of subordinate units to a minimum. These principles go far back in Prussian history and are referred as *Auftragstaktik* (task tactics) and *Selbständigkeit der Unterführer* (independence of subordinates). They were immortalized by Friedrich Wilhelm von Seydlitz's reply when Frederick the Great repeatedly attempted to get Seydlitz and his cavalry to attack the unbroken Russian infantry line at the Battle of Zorndorf in 1758: "Tell His Majesty that my head will be at his disposal after the battle, but that as long as the battle lasts I intend to use it in his service." There are examples from the early part of World War

ullstein bild

German soldiers man an antitank gun in the vain hope of stopping the overwhelming Soviet force heading their way, January 1945.

II illustrating that this concept was alive and well.

This had all changed by 1942-1943, and historian Robert M. Citino argues persuasively that new communications technologies, a key to mobile operations, contributed to the demise of the earlier doctrine. Improved communications allowed higher commanders—especially Hitler, who distrusted his generals—to intervene in operational matters. This tendency reached ridiculous levels in January 1945. Incensed at the withdrawal from Warsaw, Hitler, in order to maintain absolute control over decisions at the front, ordered special radio teams stationed at Army and Corps headquarters. The commanders were responsible for reporting all important events through this new radio channel and for making situation reports four times a day of all the facts that might be necessary for decision making by the highest leadership.

The constant shifting or relief of commanders that had reached a point of disruption during Operation Bagration continued at an accelerated pace in 1945. The quality of senior commanders also deteriorated as loyalty to Hitler became the only real prerequisite. Two loyal disciplinarians—Generals Ferdinand Schroeder and Lothar Rendulic—are typical examples. Hitler's quest for loyalty reached a ludicrous level when he appointed the amateur Heinrich Himmler to command Army Group Vistula.

Soviet Breakthroughs

On January 12, 1945, the Eastern Front exploded from the Carpathians to the Baltic as Konev's 1st Ukrainian Front, with nine armies at its disposal, launched its offensive out of the Baranow bridgehead, followed a few days later by the other fronts to its right. The Germans were caught by surprise. The weather was overcast and foggy, and the Germans had expected the Soviets to wait for better weather so they could fully utilize their immense air superiority.

The German frontline positions were quickly overwhelmed. By noon on the first day, the Soviet infantry had opened gaps that allowed tank forces to pass through. The 48th German Panzer Corps' divisions were destroyed. The reserve corps—24th Panzer—was ordered to counterattack, but its two divisions near the Baranow bridgehead were decimated before they could get out of their assembly areas.

The 4th Soviet Tank Army turned north on January 13 while the 52nd and 3rd Guards Tank Armies pushed directly west. Before nightfall Soviet spearheads had reached the Nida River, where a 70-kilometer gap provided a clear route to Upper Silesia and the Oder. The remnants of the 24th Panzer Corps went into positions around Kielce.

Because the Soviet offensive was staggered, General Smilo von Lüttwitz's Ninth Army on Army Group A's left flank had two days' warning when the 1st Belorussian Front attacked from the Pulawy and Magnuszev bridgeheads on January 14. This advance notification did not help much. Both frontline corps were badly cut up and lost half their strength before the day was over.

On January 15, the right flank of the 1st Belorussian Front, the 47th Army, broke through the German lines north of Warsaw on the boundary between Army Groups A and Center. On the same day, three armies from the 1st Ukrainian Front drove the 24th Panzer Corps out of Kielce.

The 3rd Belorussian Front under Chernyakhovsky opened the offensive against Army Group Center on January 13 with an attack on the 3rd Panzer Army north of Gumbinnen. This was followed on January 14 with an attack by the 2nd Belorussian Front under Rokossovsky out of the bridgeheads at Serock and Rozan against the Second German Army. Both the 3rd Panzer and Second Army withstood the Russian onslaught for two days and sealed all penetrations. It was not the Soviets who changed this promising beginning for Army Group Center, but Hitler. As Rokossovsky was attacking out of his bridgeheads on the Narew, Hitler ordered Panzer Corps Grossdeutschland and its

two panzer divisions in Army Group Center transferred to Army Group A.

The weather was characterized by an icy fog, and this had prevented the Soviets from fully exploiting their massive tank and air superiorities. The weather began clearing in the north on January 15, and the 3rd Panzer Division was forced back to keep its front from falling apart. The weather also cleared in the Second Army area on January 16, and the main force of the 2nd Belorussian Front—five armies and an assortment of tank and mechanized corps—broke through from the Rozan bridgehead and headed northwestward for the mouth of the Vistula.

Since Chernyakhovsky's 3rd Belorussian Front had failed to make a substantial breakthrough against the 3rd Panzer Army, it switched its main forces northward opposite the Fourth German Army for another try. In view of what was happening in the Army Group A and Second Army areas, this was the time to pull the Fourth Army and the 3rd Panzer Army back from their exposed positions. Such a withdrawal would prevent encirclement, shorten the front, and provide reserves. General Reinhardt proposed such a withdrawal on January 16 but Hitler refused. The most he was willing to do was to transfer two divisions from the Fourth Army to shore up the Second Army against Rokossovsky's drive. As usual, this compromise Band-Aid solution left things worse than they were. The Fourth Army was weakened and left in its positions, an invitation to encirclement. The two added divisions made practically no difference for the Second Army.

On a front nearly 1,000 miles wide, over 2.2 million Soviet soldiers, 6,400 tanks and assault guns, and 5,000 aircraft attacked westward into Poland in one of history's largest battles.

German Leadership Chaos

Belatedly, on January 13 Hitler ordered two infantry divisions transferred to the Eastern Front from the west. The following day, before anyone had a firm idea of how the offensive would develop, he ordered Panzer Corps Grossdeutschland and its two divisions transferred from Army Group Center to Army Group A. The next day he also ordered Army Group South to send two panzer divisions to Army Group A.

Although some have credited Guderian with convincing Hitler to take these steps, they appear to have been made by Hitler on his own volition, particularly the transfer of Panzer Corps Grossdeutschland. Guderian had argued (on January 14 and 15) that the Eastern Front would succumb without sizable and timely reinforcements from the west and a halt to Army Group South's offensive so that its armored divisions could be provided to Army Group A. However, Hitler refused to provide additional divisions from the west or stop Army Group South's offensive.

With the Ardennes offensive at an end, Hitler moved his headquarters from the Adlerhorst to Berlin on the evening of January 15. In his absence the OKH issued a directive allowing Army Group A some operational latitude in the area of the Vistula bend, including permission to evacuate Warsaw. Hitler became incensed when he discovered that it was too late to countermand the directive, as it was already being executed. He had the three senior officers of the OKH's Operations Branch arrested and relieved General Harpe, the group commander. General Ferdinand Schörner was appointed to take Harpe's job.

What followed was a dizzying shifting of commanders. General Rendulic was brought down from Norway to replace Schörner as commander of Army Group North. Rendulic's appointment was short-lived. Army Group North was renamed Army Group Courland on January 26, and the following day—after 12 days in command—Rendulic was sent to command the new Army Group North (formerly Army Group Center). General Heinrich von Vietinghoff assumed command of Army Group Courland on January 27, but on March 10 he was sent to command in Italy and Rendulic again assumed command of Army Group Courland. These officers hardly had time to unpack, much

less become familiar with their commands.

Upon his arrival in Berlin in the evening of January 15, Hitler told Guderian, to the latter's dismay, that he was moving the 6th SS Panzer Army's two corps from the Western Front to Army Group South instead of to A or Center. Army Group South was the same organization that had just been ordered to provide two panzer divisions to Army Group A.

Soviet Pursuit

By January 17 the Soviets were into the pursuit phase of their offensive nearly everywhere. The 24th Panzer Corps, caught between Konev and Zhukov's drives, was thrown back to the Pilica River. Konev's spearheads crossed that river and moved against Radomsko and Czestochowa. STAVKA ordered both Zhukov and Konev to accelerate their drive to the Oder, and Konev to use his second echelon to take Krakow and the Upper Silesia industrial area.

In the German camp, one of the first acts of the energetic but sometimes brutal General Schörner (his nickname was Schörner the Bloody) was to relieve the commander of the Ninth Army, General von Lüttwitz. It can be safely assumed that the relief was carried out at Hitler's bidding, as he was fuming at the failure of the Ninth Army to hold Warsaw. General Theodor Busse was appointed to command the Ninth.

Schörner also began to send optimistic reports to Hitler. He said that he would be able to defend Upper Silesia when he received the two promised panzer divisions from Army Group South. He gave the Seventeenth Army the mission of defending Silesia. He further assured the Führer that the Soviet drive toward Poznan in the gap between the 4th Panzer Army and the Ninth Army could also be stopped with generation of new forces. He did not explain where these forces would come from.

The dispositions and orders Schörner gave to the 4th Panzer and Ninth Armies reveal that either he was engaged in wishful thinking or that he did not fully grasp the situation in his new command. He ordered the 4th Panzer Army to stop the Soviet drive toward Breslau at a point west of Czestochowa. The Soviets were already in Czestochowa and the 4th Panzer lacked the forces to carry out the mission because the 24th Panzer Corps had become separated from the army's left flank. The army was in fact reduced to the remnants of two divisions and a couple of brigades. Schörner also ordered the Ninth Army to hold between Lodz and the Vistula and to launch a counterattack to the south. The objective was to close the gap between the Ninth Army and the 4th Panzer Army.

The Soviet pursuit was so overwhelming and swift that all plans were overcome by events. Both Zhukov and Konev's tank columns were advancing at a rate of 40-50 kilometers a day and the infantry at 30 kilometers a day. Zhukov's forces bypassed Lodz and headed for Poznan. Konev's forces were heading to Breslau, throwing the 4th Panzer Army back to the German border, while some of his infantry armies turned south to Upper Silesia. The Ninth Army (40th Panzer Corps and Panzer Corps Grossdeutschland) was trying to hold a line south of Lodz long enough for the 24th Panzer Corps to cross the Pilica River. Contact between Panzer Corps Grossdeutschland and the 24th Panzer Corps was established along the Warta River on January 22. However, they were both driven westward in the relentless tide of the Soviet offensive.

Along with them on the roads was a mass of refugees fleeing in terror from the Soviets who were beginning to exact revenge on civilians. The slaughter of civilians on the Eastern Front by both sides was on a scale that has no equal in modern history.

A wide gap had developed between the Seventeenth German Army screening the industrial region of Upper Silesia and the 14th Panzer Army, which had been driven back to the Oder. The 3rd Guards Tank Army had reached Namslau in Silesia. Konev turned this army south on January 21 along the Oder River behind the left flank of the 17th Army. His armies closed on the Oder along a 225-mile stretch between Cosel and Glogau between January 21 and 24. The Soviets crossed the river in several places while the 4th Panzer Army was left holding bridgeheads on its east bank on both sides of Breslau. Schörner's orders for the 4th Panzer Army to counterattack the Soviet bridgeheads on the west bank could not be executed.

The 3rd Guards Tank Army of the 1st Ukrainian Front coming into Silesia from the northwest appears to have deliberately left an escape route open at the southern end of the Silesian pocket. If so, it was probably a sanctioned action to avoid heavy fighting that would have destroyed much of the industrial region. The 17th German Army withdrew through this opening between January 28 and 30.

On January 23 the Germans created a new army group in the north, designated Army Group Vistula. This was considered necessary to fill the gap that had developed between Army Group Center and Army Group A, brought about by the 1st Belorussian Front bypassing Poznan on January 25 and heading directly for the Oder as the 2nd Belorussian Front turned north along the lower Vistula. Guderian had argued for bringing in General Maximilian von Weichs from Army Group F in the Balkans to take over Army Group Vistula but Hitler gave the command to Heinrich Himmler, who had never before so much as commanded a squad in combat. Hitler ordered Himmler to close the gap between the two army groups—A and Center—to cover Danzig and Poznan, and to maintain a corridor to East Prussia.

Some of the tasks given Army Group Vistula were already swamped by events. Poznan was bypassed. The Soviets were about to reach the Baltic at the mouth of the Vistula, thereby isolating Army Group Center in East Prussia and severing the corridor that Hitler wanted kept open.

For no apparent reason, the Germans resorted to a massive redesignation and reshuffling of units on January 26 and 27. Army Group North was designated Army Group Courland, while Army Group Center became Army Group North. Army Group A became Army Group Center. The new Army Group Center lost the Ninth Army to Army

Group Vistula. Himmler thus ended up commanding a front with many bends and twists from the mouth of the Vistula in the north to Glogau on the Oder where it tied into the new Army Group Center.

To defend this long front, Army Group Vistula had an assortment of units, many of them untried. It had two SS divisions, one Latvian SS Division, Volkssturm units, and remnants of the Ninth Army. Two major units of the Ninth Army—the 24th Panzer Corps and Panzer Corps Grossdeutschland—were now part of the new Army Group Center. Two divisions were encircled in Torun, and a similar-size force was encircled at Poznan. It made sense to try to hold Poznan, as it was the major transportation hub east of the Oder.

There was a blizzard in central Europe on January 27 and 28, followed by a warm spell that melted the snow and turned the ground into mud, hindering Soviet operations. Zhukov, having covered nearly 500 kilometers, was beginning to worry about his northern flank. Schörner was feverishly trying to build a front along the Oder, and Army Group Vistula's sector showed more cohesion. With the shrinking front, the space/force ratio began favoring the Germans.

The 1st Belorussian Front reached the Oder north of Kuestrin on January 31, and by February 3 it had closed up to the river from Zehden south of Stettin to its left boundary. Though the Germans still held bridgeheads east of the river, the Soviets held bridgeheads north of Kuestrin and south of Frankfurt-an-der-Oder.

The Germans were bringing in a motley assortment of reinforcements to shore up the fronts in Pomerania, in West Prussia, and along the Oder. These included the so-called Gneisenau and Blücher battle groups, Volkssturm units, and Navy and Luftwaffe personnel organized into infantry units. After adamantly refusing to withdraw the troops in Courland and East Prussia before they were surrounded, Hitler now allowed some of these units to be brought out by air and sea. On January 17 he ordered one panzer and two infantry divisions out of Courland. A further two-division drawdown was ordered on January 22. These five divisions joined Army Group Vistula.

In less than three weeks the Soviets had completed one of the most spectacular advances of the war, almost 500 kilometers. At Kuestrin, Zhukov's front was only 65 kilometers from Berlin, and there were no obvious reasons for not carrying out the second phase of the offensive—seizing Berlin and moving to the Elbe. The daily Soviet losses in the offensive were about 20 percent less than in Operation Bagration. The front commanders—Zhukov and Konev—reported to Stalin on January 26 that they would be ready to continue to Berlin after a stop of three to six days to replenish supplies and reorganize.

Stalin introduced a note of caution. He was concerned about the thinly held northern flank of the 1st and 2nd Belorussian Fronts. He told Zhukov to wait until the 2nd Belorussian Front had come farther west—10 to 14 days—and ordered Zhukov to shift the weight of his front northward and expand the bridgeheads near Kuestrin. STAVKA, in order to relieve

After receiving a briefing on their next mission, Soviet tankers dash for their vehicles. Despite blizzards, sub-freezing temperatures, and German resistance, the Soviet juggernaut rolling toward Germany would not be stopped.

National Archives

Rokossovsky of responsibility for flank security, transferred the three right-flank armies of the 2nd Belorussian Front to the 3rd Belorussian Front. To compensate for this loss, Rokossovsky was given a fresh army from the strategic reserve. His mission was to capture West Prussia and Pomerania up to the mouth of the Oder at Stettin. Konev was to keep moving toward the Neisse and Dresden.

The confluence of the Oder and Neisse Rivers is located north of Guben. The Oder River flows northwest up to that point, whereas the Neisse flows north. There was, therefore, a considerable expanse of land between the two rivers. The directive telling Konev to press on to Dresden also gave him an opportunity to shorten the distance to Berlin by occupying the territory between the two rivers.

ullstein bild

Riding atop a long column to tanks, Soviet soldiers pass through a city in East Prussia on their way to Berlin.

The 1st Ukrainian Front attacked out of the Steinau bridgehead on the upper Oder on February 8 with five armies, two of them tank armies. General Schörner also had to worry about the bridgehead between Ohlau and Brieg, south of Breslau, where Konev had two armies and two tank corps ready to attack. These drives by Konev also threatened Army Group Center's lateral lines of communication. Schörner was given two additional divisions to cope with the threat.

The 3rd Guards Tank Army smashed through the 4th Panzer Army on the first day of attack from the Steinau bridgehead. By evening of the first day its spearheads were at the outskirts of Liegnitz and began turning south to encircle Breslau. Other elements continued west to the Bober River south of Bunzlau. To the north the 4th Tank Army crushed Panzer Corps Grossdeutschland and encircled Glogau; Breslau was encircled on February 12 after three days of heavy fighting. The main thrust continued across the Queiss and Bober Rivers north of Sagan.

The southward turn of the 3rd Guards Tank Army gave the 4th Panzer Army a respite and it counterattacked, cutting behind the 4th Tank Army, which was headed toward the Neisse River. The 3rd Guards Tank Army had meanwhile turned west toward Goerlitz. Schörner attacked its southern flank with one panzer division but failed to slow its advance. By February 21 Konev had five of his armies along the Neisse from its confluence with the Oder to Goerlitz. Crossing the Neisse against the six divisions of the 4th Panzer Army should not have been a difficult task for Konev but he nevertheless called a halt to operations.

German intelligence soon began picking up signs that the Soviets were ready to restart their offensive. In the last week of February, OKH warned the army groups that the next Soviet main effort would be on the Oder-Neisse between the right flank of Army Group Vistula and Goerlitz with a secondary drive into Pomerania.

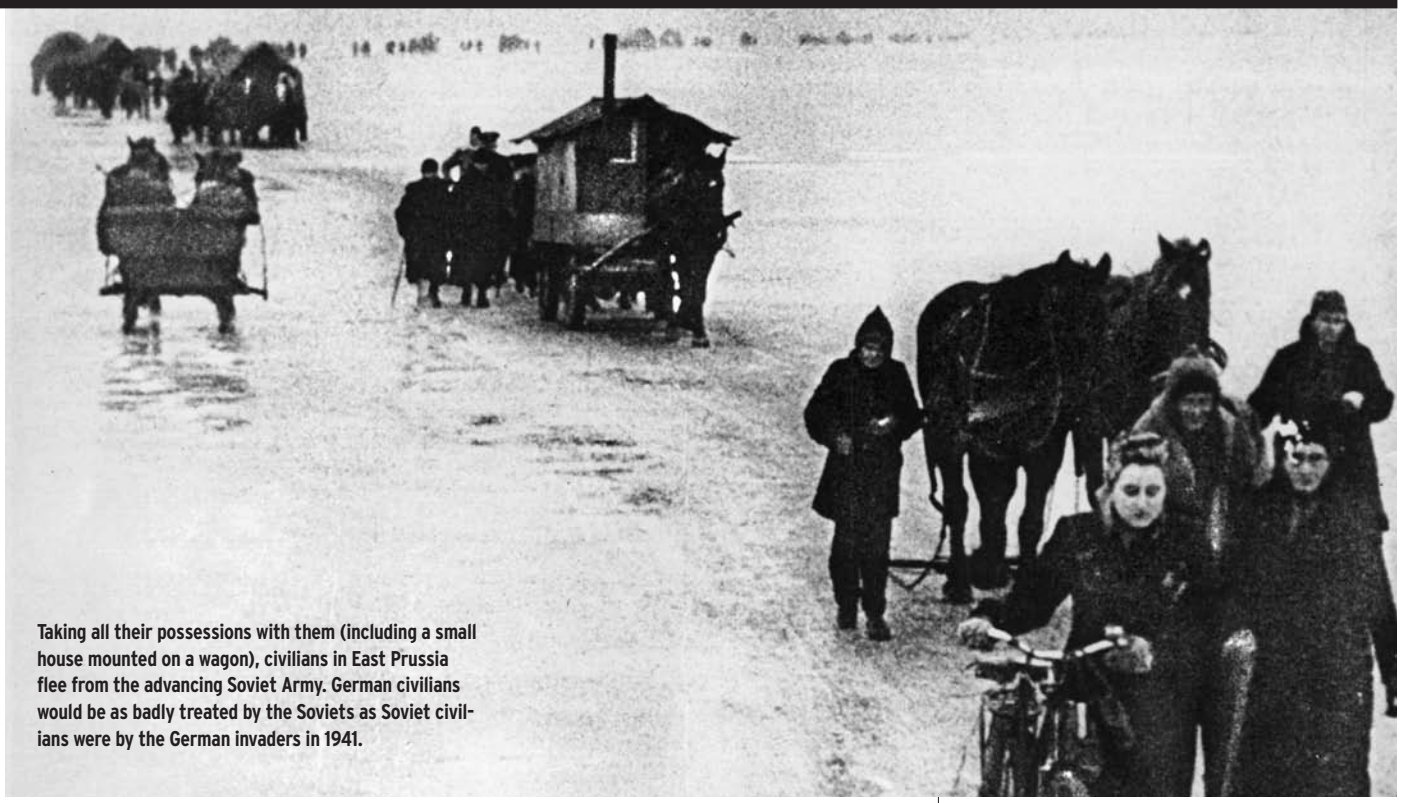
Change in Soviet Strategy

German assumptions as to probable Soviet actions, though logical, were proved wrong. They could not bring themselves to believe that the Soviets would be deflected from their ultimate objective by illusory threats to their flanks, but this appears to be what happened. The first signs of a change in Soviet intentions began to be picked up by the Germans between the 24th and 26th of February. In fact, the 3rd Belorussian, 2nd Belorussian, and major portions of the 1st Bellorussian Fronts attacked northward from Königsberg in the east to Stettin in the west.

The fighting in East Prussia had been going on since early February. By the third week of February, the 3rd Belorussian Front had pushed the Fourth Army into a 35-mile-wide and 15-mile deep beachhead along the Baltic. The front commander, Chernyakhovsky, was killed in the fighting, and Marshal Aleksandr Vasilevsky took command of the front. The 1st Baltic Front had forced the remnants of the Army Detachment (Armeeabteilung) Samland into the Samland Peninsula. Königsberg was isolated. On February 20, two days before the Soviets had planned their own attack on the forces in the Samland Peninsula, the Germans on the peninsula launched a counterattack that caught the Soviets by surprise and carried the Germans all the way to Königsberg.

General Guderian had planned a counterstroke against Zhukov since the end of Jan-

ullstein bild



Taking all their possessions with them (including a small house mounted on a wagon), civilians in East Prussia flee from the advancing Soviet Army. German civilians would be as badly treated by the Soviets as Soviet civilians were by the German invaders in 1941.

uary. It was supposed to be a two-pronged offensive with one drive from Stargard in East Pomerania and another from the Oder bend near Guben. Guderian argued that the 6th SS Panzer Army, commanded by SS General Josef (Sepp) Dietrich, consisting of five panzer divisions, should form the southern prong. Hitler refused to divert this army from its scheduled move to Hungary.

Hitler's decision reduced the offensive to a southward attack from the Stargard area behind the Oder front. Guderian planned to attack on a 50-kilometer-wide front and demanded speed for a deep thrust. In what can only be described as a remarkable feat at this point of the war, Guderian managed to scrape together from other sectors of the Eastern Front, and from the west, two corps headquarters and 10 divisions, seven of those panzer divisions.

Problems plagued the operation from the start. Guderian did not want any of the divisions employed prematurely, but Himmler had difficulties holding the staging area and eventually was forced to commit several of the new divisions. Guderian wanted an early date for the counterattack but Himmler dragged his feet. It came to a showdown with Hitler on February 13, at which Guderian demanded that the deputy chief of staff of the Army, General Walter Wenck, receive a special mandate to command the offensive.

In another compromise decision, Hitler agreed to Guderian's proposal for Wenck to command the operation under Himmler but the specific responsibilities of each were not spelled out. After a quick inspection trip, Wenck discovered that most of the forces for the counterattack were not ready and decided to launch the offensive piecemeal, starting with a one-division attack against Arnswalde, where a small, encircled German garrison was located.

The attack was launched on February 15. Catching the Soviets by surprise, the Germans captured the town by early afternoon. This initial success persuaded Himmler to commence the whole operation on February 16. That day, however, was wasted in probing attacks, and the offensive was irretrievably stuck before it got started, and Wenck was severely injured in an automobile accident on his way to brief Hitler. The German tanks were confined to roads because of the rain and mud. The badly executed operation came to an end on February 18.

Though the Stargard operation hardly caused any damage to the Soviets, it may have brought the Germans an unexpected dividend with profound consequences for their immediate postwar future. A mood of caution seemed to have taken hold of STAVKA as it began dismantling the preparations for the continued advance on Berlin and the Elbe. Instead of a westward drive, the Soviets became involved in time-consuming clearing operations in Pomerania and Silesia.

On February 17 STAVKA ordered Zhukov to send major portions of his front to the north to assist the 2nd Belorussian flank to clean out East Pomerania. Some writers have credited the fiasco-ridden Stargard attack, the Samland attack, and the German attack against the Hron bridgehead in Hungary with changing Soviet strategy. The timeline is not convincing. The Stargard attack did not start until February 15, that in Samland on February 20, and the attack at Hron on February 17.

At the beginning of the Vistula offensive on January 12 the Soviets had good reason to be in a hurry. Because Hitler had canceled the Ardennes offensive on January 3,

the Soviets may have expected that the Western Allies would resume a rapid drive into the heart of Germany. However, the Allies spent January and February recapturing lost ground and in heavy fighting west of the Rhine. Consequently, the Soviets may have concluded that there was no longer a reason to hurry.

However, the continued strength displayed by the German Army may have played a role. Despite suffering about 660,000 casualties in January and February, the German strength on the Eastern Front––about 2 million––was in fact slightly higher than at the start of the offensive, though 556,000 of these were bottled up in Courland and East Prussia. The quality of the troops is an entirely different matter. Despite losses estimated at 680,000 in January—less than other recent major offensives—the Soviet forces were in good shape for continuing their offensive.

The thaw had caused problems for the Soviets, as had German possession of several communications centers in their rear, particularly Poznan and Breslau. These were road and railroad hubs, and as long as they were in German hands they severely hampered Soviet logistic flows. Poznan held out until February 23 and Breslau for 82 days, until May 6.

The space/force ratio was also working against the Soviets. The maneuver room for their armies became restricted as they moved west against ever-shrinking German fronts. The Germans benefited from the shortened fronts—about 300 kilometers from the Baltic to the Bohemian mountains. They were able to increase the density of troops along the fronts and in some places prepare defenses in depth with reserves, a luxury they had not enjoyed since the fortunes of war turned against them. All these factors undoubtedly played into the STAVKA decision on February 17 to abort the original second phase of their offensive and turn their attention to the flanks.

The operations in Pomerania ran their course during March. The 2nd Belorussian Front managed to split the Second German Army away from the 3rd Panzer Army by driving to the coast at Koslin. The 3rd Panzer Army was pushed behind the lower Oder near Stettin on March 19. The operations against the Second German Army took longer, but Rokossovsky eventually drove it into a narrow strip along the Bay of Danzig. Army Group North ended up holding a precarious strip from Königsberg to the mouth of Vistula with the remnants of two corps holding beachheads at Gdynia and on the Hel Peninsula.

Resumption of the Soviet Westward Drive

The military situation on the Western Front changed radically in March. The Western Allies had closed to the Rhine and established beachheads on its west bank, Omar Bradley's 12th Army Group in early March at Remagen, and Bernard Montgomery's 21st Army Group about two weeks later. The drive to encircle the Ruhr was in full swing.

On March 31 Stalin received a message from Supreme Allied Commander General Dwight D. Eisenhower outlining his plans, which made no mention of Berlin. Stalin's immediate answer casually mentioned that Berlin had lost its former strategic significance. He announced that the Soviet westward offensive would begin in the second half of May.

The Soviets began a very hasty redeployment for an offensive that had Berlin as its objective. Stalin immediately called Zhukov and Konev to Moscow after receiving Eisenhower's message. He had become disturbed by the successes of the Western Allies and, concluding that the Allies were heading for Berlin, did not believe the truthfulness of Eisenhower's message. (In fact, Eisenhower, with General George C. Marshall's concurrence, had decided to let the Soviets take Berlin, on the correct assumption that urban warfare in the Nazi capital would cost horrendous casualties.)

Zhukov and Konev met with Stalin on the following day, April 1. Stalin explained the Eisenhower message and his conclusion that the British and Americans intended to take Berlin. Both front commanders were confident that they could take Berlin before the British and Americans, but the rivalry between the two commanders became obvious from the beginning. Stalin told them to remain in Moscow and present their plans for taking Berlin within 48 hours.

Zhukov and Konev presented their plans to Stalin on April 3. Zhukov's forces were only 55 kilometers from Berlin and he intended to throw four field armies and two tank armies into the main assault, with other armies involved in supporting attacks. The total number of troops involved was more than 768,000 men when follow-on echelons were included. He planned to launch his attack during darkness and use 140 anti-aircraft searchlights to blind enemy gunners. The offensive would open with a barrage from a reported 11,000 guns and large-caliber mortars.

Konev, whose forces were 120 kilometers from Berlin at their nearest point, also presented an enormous plan, but it was more complicated. Konev had massed his tank armies on the right so they could immediately exploit a breakthrough by driving directly for Berlin. His plan called for an attack at dawn across the Neisse under the protection of a massive artillery and air preparation lasting 2 hours, 35 minutes and an immense smoke screen laid by low-flying aircraft. He intended to throw five field and two tank armies into the assault—a total of about 512,000 troops. Although Konev had five armies, he needed two more, and these were promised by Stalin.

Stalin approved both plans but gave Zhukov the mission of taking the German capital; Konev was to drive west past the southern outskirts of Berlin to link up with the Americans on the Elbe. This seemed to relegate Konev to a secondary role. At a second meeting on April 3, Stalin adjusted the line on the map that separated the two fronts, stopping at the town of Lübben, about 60 kilometers southeast of Berlin. Konev was happy. He counted on speed to reach Lübben quickly and felt confident that Stalin would then give him permission to swing north to Berlin. The date for the attack was set as April 16, a whole month earlier than the date Stalin had given Eisenhower.

ullstein bild

ABOVE: With the Oder River serving as an obstacle, a Volkssturm MG-42 machine-gun crew hopes to hold off the advancing Red Army. BELOW: Lined up nearly to the horizon, scores of Soviet guns bombard German positions on the Seelow Heights, which guarded the eastern approaches to Berlin, April 1945. More than 33,000 Soviet troops died trying to take the Seelow Heights.

National Archives

Crossing the Oder/Neisse and the Seelow Heights Battle

After hard fighting, the Soviets managed to expand their bridgehead around Kuestrin in late March to where, despite German counterattacks, it was 50 kilometers long and about 15 kilometers deep. Kuestrin was to serve as the springboard for Zhukov's drive to Berlin. After they had seized the Seelow Heights ahead and to the west of the bridgehead, the road to Berlin would be relatively open.

Also in late March there was a change in command in Army Group Vistula. Himmler, who had lost some favor with Hitler after the Stargard fiasco, gladly accepted Guderian's suggestion that he "retire." Guderian recommended General Gotthard Heinrici as Himmler's replacement and Hitler accepted.

Heinrici was considered an expert on defensive operations in the German Army. Except for participating in the invasion of France in 1940, he spent the whole war on the Eastern Front. He did not have an ideological bent and was therefore not on good terms with the Nazi hierarchy. Heinrici believed in defense in depth, liberal use of firepower, and adequate reserves strategically placed. In the battle along the Oder, he had none. Other difficulties included the lack of fuel, which meant that reserves had to be closer to the battlefield than Heinrici would have wished. The multitudes of refugees on the road further complicated both the movement of reserves and resupply.

Guderian's own days were numbered. There was an angry confrontation between Guderian, General Busse (commander of the Ninth Army), and Hitler on the day that the second counterattack against Kuestrin failed—March 27. Hitler placed Guderian on six weeks' sick leave and made General Hans Krebs acting chief of staff, OKH. Krebs had been Field Marshal Busch's and, later, Field Marshal Model's chief of staff.

The key position of the battle along the Oder/Neisse was Seelow Heights, a slight rise facing Zhukov's front. The terrain to the west of the Oder at Kuestrin is characterized by a horseshoe-shaped plateau known as the Seelow Heights, which ranges in elevation from 100 to 200 feet. It overlooks a marshy valley known as the Oder Bruch, from the streams running through it. It was here on this critical height that Heinrici had a chance to blunt the Soviet attackers as they advanced across the low-lying, marshy terrain in front of and below the heights exposed to the German guns. Heinrici assumed that Zhukov was aware of this and that he would go to special lengths to quickly seize the area.

The area on and around Seelow Heights was held by the 56th Panzer Corps under General Helmuth Weidling. Weidling had assumed command of the corps when he arrived on the night of April 12 and used it to block the Soviets on the main route to Berlin. The other two corps of General Busse's Ninth Army were deployed on his flanks—the 101st on his left and the 11th SS on his right.

The 56th Panzer Corps was a panzer corps in name only. It consisted of the 9th

Continued on page 98

London's Imperial War Museum is a "must-see" on any visit to England.

ALTHOUGH BRITAIN HAS a number of war museums, the Imperial War Museum (IWM) is acknowledged as the Holy Grail of them all—the one you must visit when in London. You won't have a chance to get bored at the Imperial War Museum, located in London's fashionable Chelsea district.

You've got to love a museum that greets you with a behemoth pair of 15-inch naval guns from two British battleships.

Entering the cavernous main entry hall (appropriately named the "Large Exhibits Gallery"), you're brought to a standstill by an astounding display of infernal machines of war: a towering V2 rocket; a V1 flying bomb hovering menacingly overhead; several howitzer artillery pieces; a dogfighting Mark1A Spitfire, North American P-51 Mustang, Focke Wulf Fw-190, and Heinkel He-162; a German one-man Biber submarine; a copy of the "Little Boy" atomic bomb casing that America dropped on Hiroshima; several World War II tanks including Montgomery's "General Grant" tank used in the deserts of North Africa; a Russian T-34; an M4A4 Sherman V; a German Jagdpanther Tank Destroyer; and the Tamzine, a small fishing boat that took part in the Dunkirk evacuation. You could (and should) spend an hour just navigating this hall before moving on to the other galleries.

Once you pull yourself away, continue down to the ground floor to the "World War I," "World War II," and "Conflicts Since 1945" galleries. It makes sense to view the eight WWI galleries first, and then move on to the World War II section that covers the Blitzkrieg (where you sit in a bomb shelter listening to—and feeling—an air raid taking place above you, then emerge into a diorama of destruction), the Battle of Britain, the Home Front, the War at Sea against Germany and Italy, the Mediterranean and Middle East, the Eastern Front, Europe Under the Nazis, the Bomber Offensive, the Northwest Europe campaign, and War in the Far East. These themes are vividly illustrated through extraordinary documentary films, informative signage, historic photos, realistic models, uniforms, weapons, medals, authentic posters, maps, documents, and more.

Rather than repel visitors, a pair of imposing naval guns outside the Imperial War Museum welcomes tourists and gives a hint at the treasures to be found inside.

Many of the artifacts have great historical significance, including Herman Göring's tunic and the large bronze Nazi Eagle liberated from the Reichstag in Berlin. Other artifacts are very poignant: Red Cross food parcels that sustained Allied POWs through the bitter months of 1945 when Germany's food supply was collapsing under the Allied onslaught, a POW's teapot made of food cans, and their metal eating utensils.

The Secret War gallery on the first floor is not to be missed. It tells the story of how the British MI5 decoded enemy wireless traffic and arrested German agents almost as soon as they landed in Britain. Networks of civilians in France and Belgium were set up to pass on strategic information to the British, while the Special Operations Executive (SOE) recruited over 13,000 men and women from military and civilian backgrounds to wage a war of attrition in Europe. Look for the captured German Enigma encoding machine, films of agents training, weapons, secret radios, and other spy paraphernalia.

The Holocaust exhibition on the third and fourth floors is one of the most powerful and effective exhibits you'll ever see in a military museum. It illustrates this dark period of the war very professionally, bringing home the horrors of the Third Reich's efforts at genocide. The introductory gallery illustrates how Hitler and his gang influenced Germany and why the German people perpetuated or tacitly supported mankind's worst plunge into depravity. The exhibits and displays in the next dimly lit gallery leave you shaken and

pondering the question, "How could such a cultured country go astray so badly?" Parents will need to put some thought into whether their children are prepared for this rather grim section.

The museum building itself is suitably staid for the purpose of showcasing Britain's glorious military history. Completed in 1815, the current museum was the central portion of a mental hospital, converted into the military museum in 1936.

Plan to spend a full day at the IWM, although you might be better dividing it up into two half days to properly absorb the detailed information that is presented at every turn, and the overwhelming number of exhibits. It's also a good idea to take a mental breather every couple of hours while you enjoy lunch or refreshments in the café. It would be ironic to suffer from "shell shock" in a military museum.

The main entrance gallery is crowded with a spectacular array of military artifacts from WWII.

An audio guide is available to let you tour the museum at your own pace.

Location: Lambeth Road, London
Hours: Open daily (except December 24-26)
10:00 AM - 6:00 PM
Admission: Free
(admission charge for special exhibits)
Website: www.iwm.org.uk

There's also a highlights tour of the main galleries, which covers 40 key exhibits. The museum's guidebook is well worth the price to read as you go through the galleries, and the excellent gift shop stocks an impressive selection of books, toys, knick-knacks, and militaria.

Entry to the IWM is free, except for special displays. Be sure to get a map of the museum to get you oriented—the museum is large and there is much to see. If you have only limited time, you would be wise to prioritize which galleries you wish to visit.

The IWM has a number of other branches throughout London and England, including HMS *Belfast* (anchored in the Thames River), the fascinating underground Cabinet War Rooms near Whitehall, the IWM at RAF Duxford, and the IWM North at Manchester.

Savo Island

Continued from page 39

pumped into the silhouette, frightening men in the water and aboard *Ellett*. The target was *Canberra*! Unbeknown to Moffat, *Ellett* had been ordered to scuttle the Australian cruiser with gunfire, but could not. *Canberra* did not sink until torpedoed by another destroyer at 8 AM.

Meanwhile, *Chicago*'s befuddled captain was looking for game, and he settled on *Patterson* in the half light of the new day. Luckily, no hits were scored before *Chicago* ceased firing.

Astoria was still afloat, and her crew wanted her to stay that way. Prodigious efforts by Captain Greenman and 300 volunteers who reboarded her following rescue proved fruitless. A minesweeper tried to pass a tow, but that effort failed and a cargo ship finally came alongside to evacuate the salvage crew. *Astori*a heeled over to port at 12:35 PM and sank.

Hundreds of men remained in the water for hours. Shortly after crawling aboard a life raft, Rusty Campbell went back over the side to make room for an injured man. Somehow, he wound up alone and adrift on the wide sea, fearful that his limited prowess as a swimmer would kill him. He was treading water, getting panicky, when something nudged him in the side. A shark? No. It was an empty 5-inch powder can, which he grabbed for dear life. Minutes later, several more powder cans floated by, and Campbell put one apiece beneath each armpit and behind his knees. Out of the darkness came the sound of singing. It was a shipmate, who was repeating the lyric of a popular song: "Hold tight, hold tight. I want some seafood, Mama." The two exchanged tales and scuttlebutt, then drifted apart. The tide carried Campbell toward the burning and grounded transport *Elliott*.

In time, Campbell saw ships stopping to take on survivors. His prayers seemed about to be answered when he saw a destroyer (*Ellett*) heading right for him. She was only a hundred yards away when she began to drop depth charges at an imagined submarine in the channel. The concussion nearly bilged Rusty, but he desperately clung to his ammunition cans until another destroyer, *Helm,* came up beside him. Campbell was dragged to the deck, where he asked the time. It was 9 AM. His watch had stopped when he went into the water; it read 2:40 AM.

The unprecedented loss of four first-line cruisers in a single action in which the enemy had been but superficially damaged was catastrophic. The defeat was mitigated somewhat on August 10 when an American submarine put a pair of torpedoes into *Kako*'s hull and left her sinking off New Ireland. That put the score in the Solomons at four heavy cruisers and one transport sunk and one destroyer (*Jarvis*) missing to one Japanese heavy cruiser sunk.

Kelly Turner's amphibious force and its surviving escorts retired early in the morning, as promised. It carried in its holds a vast amount of equipment and stores belonging to the 1st Marine Division.

The Savo Island naval battle had profound influences on the early and middle parts of the six-month American-run campaign to permanently secure a solid forward base for future offensive operations at Guadalcanal. It largely erased the headier effects of the massive, morale-restoring victory at Midway; it rendered the American surface navy timid, a timidity that all but starved the nascent Guadalcanal battle of food, troops, and weapons. It cast a pall on every aspect of the fighting well into October and probably forestalled a victory that could not be assured until halfway into November 1942.

At a single stroke at Savo, a relatively small Imperial Navy surface battle force seized the initiative, gave the U.S. Navy its worst defeat, and set the terms for months of campaigning that involved all that the naval and air forces of both sides could bring to bear. By brilliantly guiding his operationally outnumbered cruisers to victories over tactically outnumbered Allied battle componants, Vice Admiral Gunichi Mikawa came as close to defeating the offensive war plans of the U.S. Navy as the Japanese carrier force had done at Pearl Harbor. □

Tarawa

Continued from page 81

afraid to admit that I just don't know.

What I do know is that many veterans are still paying a prolonged and painful price for our service. Because of the remaining grenade fragments still in my legs, my wife laughingly calls me a "walking junkyard" and says that I clank when I walk.

I've had several hospital stays since being discharged in 1945. One incident was in 1985 in Tucson, where I now live. I was hospitalized for two weeks with a shrapnel-infection. During surgery, a shredded piece of my uniform was removed along with the offending shrapnel. That operation occurred 42 years after being wounded. And the latest hospitalization was in 2003, again due to infected shrapnel. That was almost 60 years after being wounded! And doctors tell me that the remaining shrapnel could cause another infection any time.

But, hey, I'm not complaining. How can I, when so many others suffered more horrible injuries, such as loss of limbs or the weeping lad I saw with almost half his jaw blown away. At least I'm alive, unlike all those young and courageous Marines whose lives were snapped off while still in their prime.

However, I still have philosophical questions regarding my personal Battle of Tarawa. For example, what if one of the Japanese I was unable to kill because my machine gun jammed was the one who later threw that grenade that wounded me? Or what if I'd survived intact and had gone on to fight in other campaigns and then gotten killed? Something else: Japan had purchased scrap metal from the United States before the war started. Could the fragments still embedded in my body be some of that metal? Sure, that's unlikely, but life is sometimes very strange.

Here's something more: I've often thought about the Japanese solider who threw the grenade that wounded me and was himself later killed. Whoever he was, I've long forgiven him. He did his duty as he saw fit, as I did mine. But who was he,

how old was he, what was he like? Did he have a sense of humor? Was he an only child or did he have siblings? Was he as scared as I during that compressed time? He must have known he was going to die. What were his last thoughts? In other circumstances, could he and I have been friends, enjoying a cold beer or a cup of warm sake and sushi? Perhaps.

For some 60 years I apparently suppressed many of these wartime memories. After being discharged from the Marines, I earned a college degree in journalism and doggedly decided to "suck it up" and get on with my life and my career.

After I left service, I may have suffered from what used to be called shell shock but now is referred to as post-traumatic stress disorder. My patient mother sat up with me on many restless nights when I drifted in and out of horrific nightmares.

And after I married, I often would frighten my young wife Loraine with terrified outcries during my shattered sleep, such as, "Hey, they're coming! We got to stop them now!" Loraine would comfort me by holding me tight and softly saying, "It's okay, hon, it's all over!"

The disturbing dreams went on sporadically for decades and I still occasionally wake up in a sweat. For years I seldom discussed my deeply embedded wartime remembrances. Loraine listened sympathetically on those rare occurrences when I did open up.

Civil War General William Sherman once observed that war is hell. It sure the hell is. And sociologists, psychologists, and historians talk endlessly about why soldiers commit atrocities. But war itself is an atrocity beyond true comprehension and measure. And I'm convinced that humankind must end wars or wars will eliminate humankind. Einstein said he didn't know what atrocious weapons would be used in the next world war, but the war after that would be fought with stones.

Finally, I've given my Purple Heart and other campaign medals to Nickie, my 20-year-old grandson and namesake. I fervently hope that he never earns any war medals of his own. □

WWII HISTORY

Have a question about your subscription? Need To Change Your Address?

FAX US: 570-322-2063, c/o: Customer Service.
CALL US: 800-219-1187. **EMAIL US:** Kathyp@sovhomestead.com

SOVEREIGN MEDIA COMPANY, c/o: Customer Service,
1000 Commerce Park Drive, Suite 300,
Williamsport, PA 17701

Continued from page 93

Parachute Division, the 20th Panzergrenadier Division, and the "Muncheberg" Panzer Division. The 9th Parachute Division, on the corps' left flank, was organized in its present form from various parachute-training units. The 20th Panzergrenadier Division had been seriously depleted over the past months. The "Muncheberg" Panzer Division had also been formed in February from a motley assortment of regular army elements, training units, SS, Volkssturm, and Hitler Youth components.

Heinrici's two armies (3rd Panzer and Ninth) had fewer than 700 tanks and self-propelled assault guns. He faced the assault not only of Zhukov's front but also Rokossvsky's front in the north. Because of the small number of weapons and the severe lack of fuel, the tanks and assault guns were dispersed among the frontline units. The Germans were also totally outmatched in artillery. Against estimates that range upward to 20,000 indirect-fire weapons of all calibers that Zhukov and Konev each could muster, Heinrici is reported to have had 744, complemented by about 600 anti-aircraft guns used as artillery. Ammunition and fuel supplies were critically low, less than two and a half days' basic load in the Army. Some of Heinrici's units were down to a half dozen rounds per gun.

Heinrici knew that he could not stop the attack of the massive armies to his front—armies that had covered 1,100 kilometers and crossed numerous rivers in the past nine months against a German Army that had been in much better shape. The only thing he could do was delay the eventual outcome. All but the most fanatical Nazis and the delusional bunch in the Führer bunker knew that the war was lost.

Heinrici believed in detailed reconnaissance, and from these reports he concluded accurately that the attack would come on April 16. During the night of April 15-16, he ordered his troops on the Seelow Heights withdrawn from their front line. The heaviest artillery barrage of World War II—real shock and awe—marking the beginning of Zhukov's offensive therefore fell on empty German positions. Although this was a good beginning, it was only a matter of time before the enemy would break through. The avalanche of explosives was so great that it caused an atmospheric disturbance. Survivors talked about a sudden hot wind that blew through the forests. The dull roar of the guns could be heard in the eastern suburbs of Berlin, and a warm breeze rattled blinds.

The troops of the 8th Guards Army under General Vasily I. Chuikov, defender of Stalingrad, began to move forward during the bombardment. As soon as they were within range they were greeted by very accurate fire from the Seelow Heights. Zhukov's frontline commanders later complained bitterly that the 140 anti-aircraft searchlights, rather than blinding the enemy, illuminated the Soviet troops moving forward. It was not long before the advance was brought to a halt by German fire and the soft marshy ground that mired the tanks and assault guns.

Zhukov made some quick decisions. He ordered heavy air strikes and artillery fire against the Seelow Heights. In an apparent act of frustration, he also decided to commit his tank armies before the infantry had punched a hole through the German lines—a breach of standard practice for which he has been severely criticized. Zhukov's infantry and armor became entangled in a paralyzed mass in front of the German main battle positions. Fortunately for the Soviets, the Germans did not have the forces to take advantage of this lucrative opportunity.

Zhukov's exasperation may have been heightened by what was happening on Konev's front. Konev was in a hurry. His front attacked at 150 sites along the Neisse River under the cover of a dense smoke screen and an artillery and air preparation (6,500 aircraft supported the two fronts) that lasted 2 hours, and 35 minutes. The main crossing site was in the area of Buchholz and Triebel. The attack hit Schörner's Army Group Center at its boundary with the Ninth Army. The terrain on the west bank was steep and heavily fortified with concrete bunkers. Konev planned to throw in his armored divisions as soon as his troops had secured footholds on the western bank. Konev had his first bridgehead secured by 7:15 AM, and one hour later his tanks and assault guns were engaging the enemy. By the end of the artillery preparation Konev's troops were established on the west bank of the Neisse after securing 133 of the 150 crossing sites. Elements of two armies and two tank armies were across the river. In the Triebel area the Soviets had already punched through the German defenses. In eight hours Konev's forces had opened a 30-kilometer gap in the German lines and were pouring through. By the end of the day Konev's troops were only 30 kilometers from Lübben.

Konev planned to dash past Cottbus and head for Lübben, the place where Stalin's boundary between the two fronts ended. If he reached Lübben quickly, he planned to ask Stalin for permission to immediately swing north to Berlin. He figured such permission would be granted, as it was in the evening of April 17.

With Konev's breakthrough in the south, the immediate fate of Berlin was decided no matter how gallantly General Weidling's men defended the Seelow Heights. Heinrici had used up all his reserves to support the Ninth Army. Two SS divisions—Nordland and Nederland—hampered by lack of fuel—started moving from the 3rd Panzer Army sector at midnight on April 17 toward the Ninth Army and Seelow Heights. SS Division Nordland (composed mostly of Norwegian and Danish volunteers) was assigned to the 56th Panzer Corps. They arrived in driblets and too late to affect the outcome of the battle, which was already lost.

The fighting on Seelow Heights had ended by April 19. It had been a costly affair for the Soviets. They admitted to 33,000 killed and the loss of 743 tanks and self-propelled assault guns; the Germans lost 12,000 men. But the road to the German capital was now open from both the south and east, and virtually nothing barred the Soviet advance on the German capital. The endgame in Europe was about to begin. □

MANY HAVE LEFT THEIR MARK ON HISTORY.

Fortunately, there's still time for you.

American Military University offers 100% online bachelor's and master's degrees in history and military history designed specifically for working adults who seek to balance their academic study with work and family commitments without sacrificing the quality of their education. Join a community of scholars from around the globe and explore those topics that have shaped our world.

The Bachelor of Arts in Military History offers concentrations in:

- Early European Studies
- Modern European Studies
- 18th and Mid 19th Century American Military History
- Mid 19th and 20th Century American Military History

The Master of Arts in Military History offers concentrations in:

- American Military History
- American Revolution
- American Civil War
- World War II
- War Since 1945

SLOAN-C™ AWARD WINNER

2009 & 2010 Effective Practices Award
2009 Ralph E. Gomory Award for Quality Online Education

AMU

LEARN MORE AT
amuonline.com/ww-quarterly

OR CALL
877.777.9081

Text "AMU" to 44144 for more info. *Message and data rates may apply.*

What's this? AMU-QR.com

American Military University

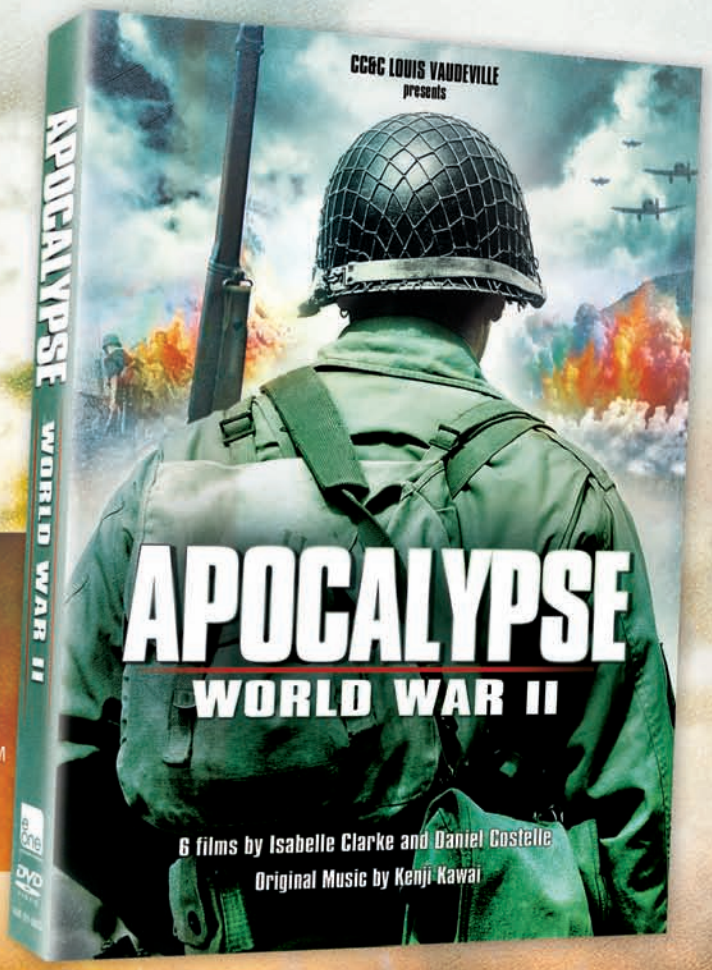
EXPERIENCE WORLD WAR II IN HIGH-DEF

THE FIRST COMPLETELY NEW FILM HISTORY OF THE WAR IN DECADES FEATURING NEVER-BEFORE-SEEN FOOTAGE – COLORIZED AND RESTORED

"CHILLING"
–The New York Times

"ASTONISHING"
–NY Daily News

This landmark documentary series provides an in-depth examination of the Second World War, as seen through the eyes of those who lived through it. Using uncensored footage – most of it previously unseen – the series shows, in breath-taking color, what history's most devastating war was actually like – on the battlefront, in the air and on the sea.



AVAILABLE NOW ON DVD AND BLU-RAY™

6 HOURS OF AMAZING FOOTAGE
PLUS 2 HOURS OF BONUS FEATURES
Including a Making-of Featurette and Additional, Never-Before-Seen Footage

AS SEEN ON TV

AVAILABLE AT amazon.com

e one entertainmentone